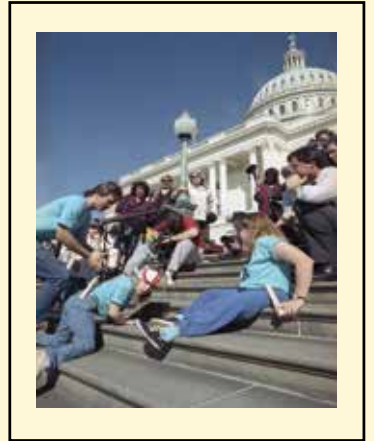




Bodies on the Line

Churches and the movement for disability rights

faith in action for social justice



U.S. Can.

\$ 4.95



April 2022

sojo.net

Vol. 51 No. 4

LEAVE A LEGACY THROUGH A RETIREMENT GIFT TO SOJOURNERS



- Retirement gifts cost you nothing now, and you retain control of your assets.
- By leaving a retirement gift to Sojourners, our mission and work will receive the full value of what you give.
- Your gift will empower our truth-telling nonprofit journalism, faith-rooted advocacy, and all we do to articulate the biblical call to social justice—including training others to do the same.
- Retirement savings can include individual retirement accounts (IRA); 401(k) and 403(b) plans; private pension plans; state, local, and federal government pension plans; annuities, and certain taxable funds earmarked as retirement (for example, inherited stock).

RAISE YOUR VOICE FOR JUSTICE BY GIVING TO SOJOURNERS

If you name Sojourners a beneficiary of your retirement plan, our mission and work will receive the full value of what you give, instead of some amount going to the state and Sojourners receiving the remainder.

For more information, contact **Legacy Giving: legacy@sojo.net**

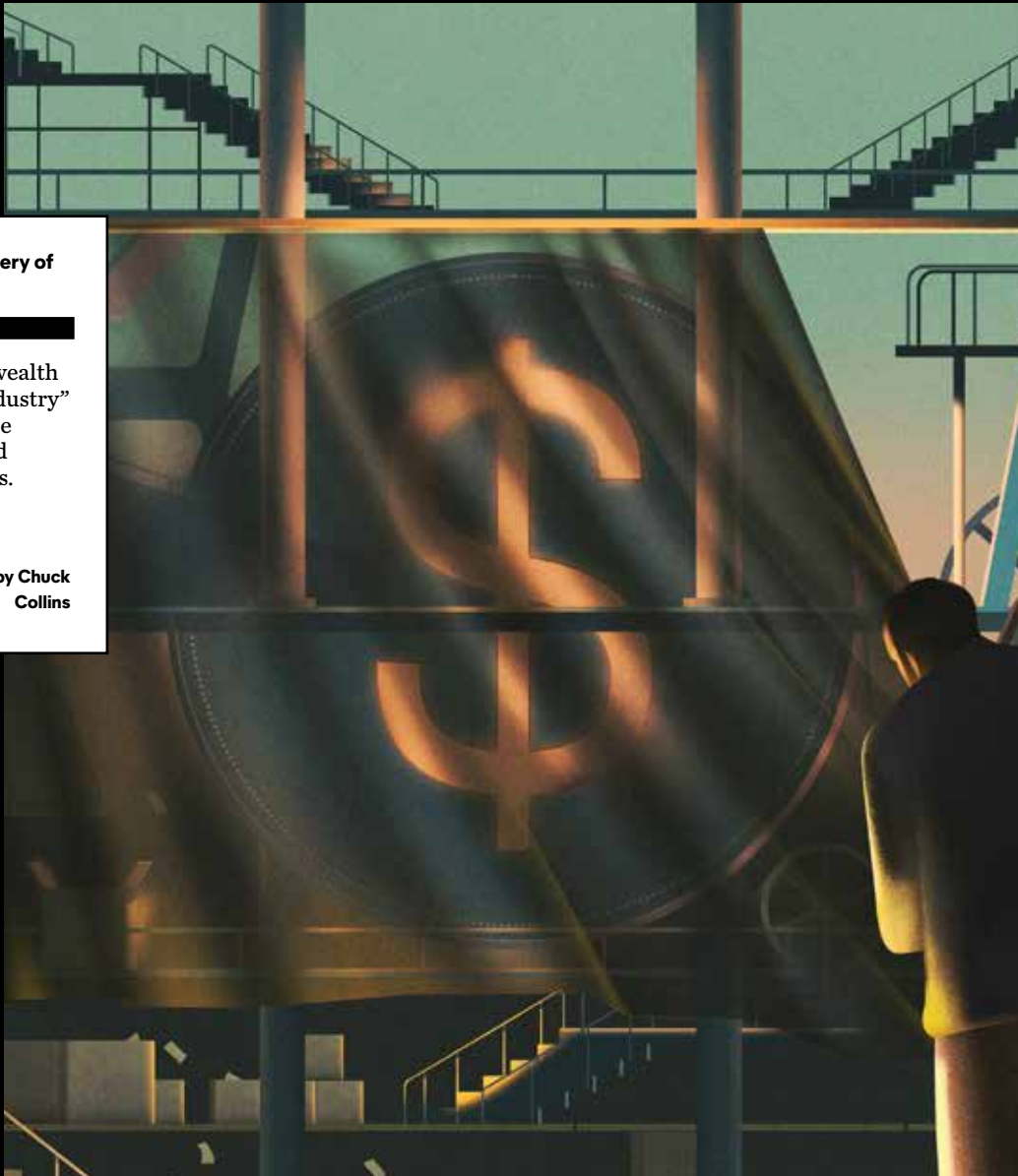
SOJOURNERS

“THE UNITED STATES DIDN’T BECOME A TAX HAVEN OVERNIGHT.”

The Machinery of Inequality

How the “wealth
defense industry”
worsens the
income and
wealth gaps.

by Chuck
Collins



34

22

Bodies on the Line Disability rights sit-ins in the 1970s launched a civil rights movement for disabled people. The church hasn’t always been on board.

by Aleja
Hertzler-McCain

28

The Sacred Work of Remembering People of faith are resurrecting the stories of lynching victims—one plaque at a time.

by Carol
Kuruvilla

Voices

6	Spotlight
9	Grain of Salt Naming our history. by Jim Rice
	Commentary
12	Blockchain Using financial self-interest to further nuclear disarmament. by Lyndon Burford
14	Antisemitism How Christianity has been weaponized against Jewish people. by Chloe Specht
15	Princeton Seminary Contending with the sins of the past. by Heath W. Carter
	Columns
16	Deep Economy Every opinion does not count the same. by Bill McKibben
18	From the Dust Who "owns" the land? by Liuan Huska
	Eyewitness
20	An animal blessing. by Russell Eleven



41

Vision

	Culture
39	Film <i>The Green Knight, The Power of the Dog,</i> and the cost of truth. by Zachary Lee
41	On Film <i>The Worst Person in the World ... isn't.</i> by Abby Olcese
42	Curated What does it really take to become <i>Untamed</i> ? by Faith-Marie Zamblé
	Reviews
43	Books New poetry by Ocean Vuong. by Olivia Bardo
44	An excerpt from <i>Forever in Thy Path.</i> by Harry H. Singleton III
	Poetry
46	My God is heavyset & broad. by Alfonso Sasieta
	Living the Word
48	The punchline of Easter. by T. Denise Anderson
	H'rumphs
50	What IKEA can teach us about theological deconstruction. by Jenna Barnett

Sojourners magazine (ISSN 0364-2097) is published monthly, except September-October is combined, at 408 C Street NE, Washington, DC 20002. Periodicals Postage Paid at Washington, D.C., and additional mailing offices. Canadian Publications Sales Agreement #257494. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Sojourners, PO Box 48, Congers, NY 10920-9856.

50

LAUNCHING SPRING 2022



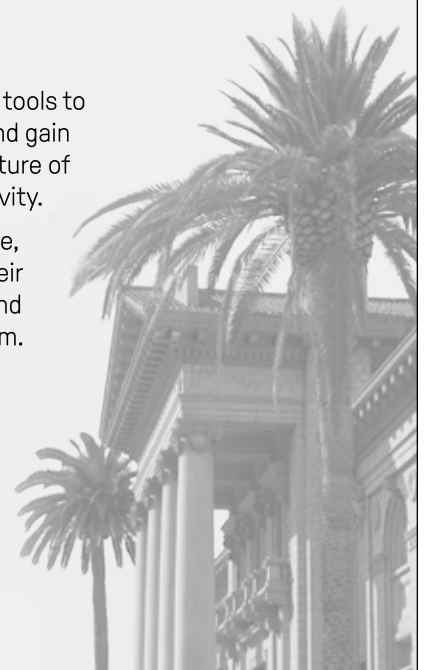
BLACK JUSTICE CERTIFICATE

- The Black Justice Certificate at the University of Redlands will strengthen individuals by analyzing how racism manifests in schools, classrooms, business, workplace, and everyday life.
- The coursework will enhance the individual's understanding of how racism affects everyone.
- This certificate will provide tools to address race and racism and gain strategies to support a culture of respect, equity, and inclusivity.
- By the end of the certificate, participants will deepen their knowledge of the history and definition of race and racism.

NO APPLICATION OR ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS

CONTACT US TODAY!

909-748-8868 → info-scs@redlands.edu → scs.redlands.edu



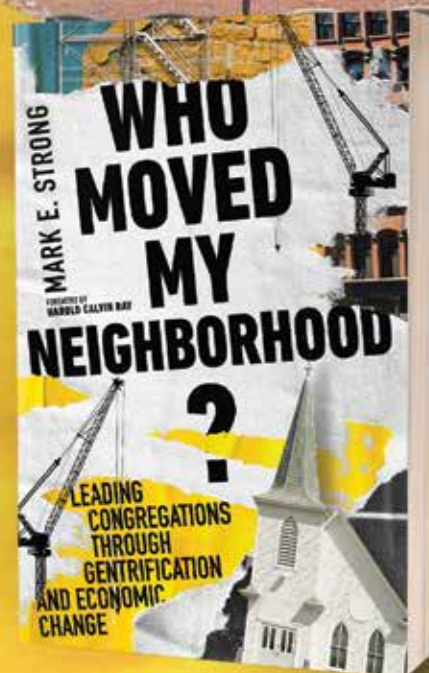
A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO LEADING YOUR CHURCH COMMUNITY THROUGH GENTRIFICATION

"A timely and prophetic word on the ongoing injustices of race and place in America, from one of the most recognized leaders on the subject of gentrification."

—KEN WYTSMA, author of *The Myth of Equality*



#readivp
shop ivpress.com



From the Editor

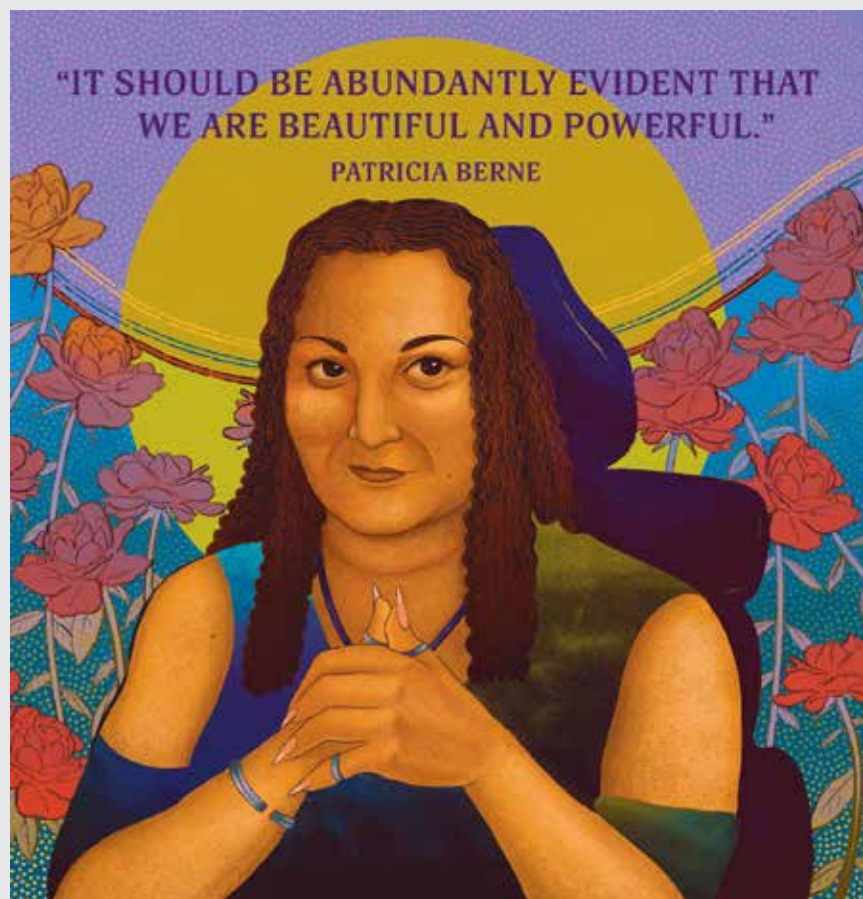
Over the past four or five decades, many Christians have provided leadership and active support for movements to end U.S. wars in Vietnam and Central America, to oppose the nuclear arms race and apartheid in South Africa, and to fight for the rights of racial minorities and immigrants—standing on the side of peace and human rights for a wide variety of people. But not for everybody. Aleja Hertzler-McCain explains in this issue that individual congregations have stepped up on behalf of disability rights, but the broader church has sometimes fallen short. As Nazarene pastor Letiah Fraser put it, “The church is lagging behind mainstream society,” not only in advocating for justice for people with disabilities—which often appears in the form of access—but in particular regarding accommodations and nondiscrimination required by the Americans with Disabilities Act, from which religious institutions are exempt. Hertzler-McCain reminds us that disability justice—like all justice work—is a gospel imperative, and it should be a central component of churches’ engagement with the world around us.

RESPONSE

Big Feelings About Noah

Many of you shared with us that the February 2022 cover story, “Noah’s Silence at the End of the World,” was a new—and surprising—take on the familiar story. “Best article I’ve ever read countering the zealotry of a Christianity focused on end times theology,” Jim MacDonald [f](#) wrote. Keith Allen [f](#) added: “‘Noah’s Ark’ makes a lot of sense if one sees the scriptures as the story of a people getting to know God as opposed to the history of God.” While Sam Simpson [f](#) enjoyed the article, he “felt it was hugely weakened by what is surely an over presumptuousness regarding Noah’s attitude and conduct at the time of the flood.” Several commenters connected the story to what is unfolding amid the pandemic: “There are people who listen and people who will not. When do you get to a point [where] we worry about our own and move on?” asked Timothy Danser [f](#).

Write us: response@sojo.net



"DISABLED PEOPLE CARING FOR EACH OTHER CAN BE A PLACE OF DEEP HEALING."

Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha

Writer, educator, and disability/transformational-justice worker

CONTRIBUTING



Carol Kuruvilla

Freelance reporter Carol Kuruvilla's (p. 28) personal faith journey "drew [her] to religion reporting." Having grown up in a "close-knit, conservative Indian Christian community," she was inspired by "the breadth of experiences people have while seeking the divine" as a student at New York University. Today, Kuruvilla strives to amplify "stories about faith groups that don't often get a microphone" and hopes readers "reflect on how their own beliefs have been touched by the faith of those they read about."



Chuck Collins

"We have a very high tolerance for inequality if we believe that everyone can become wealthy and that the rules are fair," says Chuck Collins (p. 34), author, co-editor of *Inequality.org*, and director of the Program on Inequality and the Common Good at the Institute for Policy Studies. Dedicated to exposing the "machinery" generating extreme disparities, Collins says the "goal is to capture the horror of inequality, the hope of the social movements, and even a little bit of humor in the telling of it."

Adam Russell Taylor	President
Robert Wilson-Black	Chief Executive Officer
Karen L. Lattea	Vice President and Chief Human Resources Officer
Jessica Felix-Romero	Chief Strategy and Impact Officer
Adwoa Rey	Chief Advancement Officer
Sandi Villarreal	Editor-in-Chief
Jim Rice	Editor
Julie Polter	Managing Editor
Rose Marie Berger	Senior Editor
Christina Colón	Associate Editor
Candace Sanders	Art Director
Bob Sabath	Director of Web and Digital Technology
Betsy Shirley	Managing Editor, sojo.net
Jenna Barnett	Associate Culture Editor, sojo.net
Mitchell Atencio	Assistant News Editor, sojo.net
Josiah R. Daniels	Assistant Opinion Editor, sojo.net
Christian Smuterman	Multimedia Director
Jayne Marie Smith	Multimedia Producer
Tiarra Lucas	Graphic Designer
Heather Brady	Audience Engagement Manager
Lisa Daughtry-Weiss	Sr. Dir. of Fdn. Relations, Performance Officer
Beth Cooper-Chrismon	Director of Individual Giving
Rachel Buller	Director of Donor Services
Jason Smith	Director of Strategic Gifts
Anthonia Emordi	Associate Director of Strategic Gifts
Jerrica Frazier	Donor Services and Database Manager
Sandra Sims	Senior Director of Marketing
Cynthia J. Martens	Senior Director of Circulation and Production
Rose Urankar	Advertising Sales Manager
Sandy Ovalle Martínez	Director of Campaigns and Mobilizing
Terrance M. McKinley	Director of Racial Justice and Mobilizing
Susanna Bean	Digital Mobilizing Manager
Paola Fuentes Gleghorn	Immigration/Women & Girls Campaign Coordinator
Christine Lee	Campaigns and Mobilizing Associate
Lauren Whitney Reliford	Political Director
Moya Harris	Fellowship Program Director
Brion Thomas	Senior Accountant
Krystal Brewer	Office Manager
Elizabeth Denlinger Reaves	Sr. Adviser and Dir. of the President's Office
J.K. Granberg-Michaelson	Senior Research Associate
Aria Christenson	Executive Assistant

FELLOWS **Olivia Bardo**, Sojo.net; **Liz Bierly**, Magazine; **Gerald Olufemi-Lamar Darling Jr.**, Campaigns; **Aleja Hertzler-McCain**, Magazine; **Jules Park**, Advertising; **Jackie Resh**, Circulation; **Chloe Specht**, Donor Services; **Katie Smart**, Communications; **Leslie Williston**, Digital Mobilizing and President's Office

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS Michelle Alexander, Diana Butler Bass, Walter Brueggemann, Joan Chittister, Shane Claiborne, Danny Duncan Collum, Michael Curry, Edwidge Danticat, Marie Dennis, Julian DeShazier, E.J. Dionne Jr., Kelly Brown Douglas, Joshua DuBois, Michael Eric Dyson, Reta Halteman Finger, Kenyatta R. Gilbert, Eddie Glaude, Wes Granberg-Michaelson, David Gushee, Cynthia L. Hale, Lisa Sharon Harper, Jen Hatmaker, Obery Hendricks, Carolina Hinojosa-Cisneros, Barbara A. Holmes, José Humphreys III, Joel Hunter, Liuan Huska, Kathy Khang, Grace Ji-Sun Kim, Anne Lamott, James Martin, Bill McKibben, Brian McLaren, Jeania Ree V. Moore, Otis Moss III, Ched Myers, Whitney Parnell, Eboo Patel, Soong-Chan Rah, Richard Rohr, Alexia Salvatierra, Rob Schenck, Najeeba Syeed, Barbara Brown Taylor, Sharon E. Watkins, Cornel West, Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove, Randy Woodley, Bill Wylie-Kellermann, Jenny Yang, Faith-Marie Zambé

Sojourners Online: sojo.net, **Twitter:** @sojourners
Get free email updates at sojo.net/newsletters.



1,927

Number of K-12 schools in the U.S. with offensive Native American-themed mascots

60

Number of K-12 schools that retired an offensive mascot in 2021

47 percent

People who say their schools taught inaccuracies about Native Americans

OUR MISSION

The mission of *Sojourners* magazine is to inspire hope and action by articulating the biblical call to racial and social justice, life and peace, and environmental stewardship.

BUSINESS AND EDITORIAL ADDRESS

Please send all business and editorial correspondence to *Sojourners*, 408 C Street NE, Washington, DC 20002.

SUBSCRIPTION AND CHANGE OF ADDRESS

Subscribers: Visit sojo.net/subscribe to manage your subscription or print change of address on a card with old address label attached; send all subscription correspondence and address changes (except countries listed below) to *Sojourners*, PO Box 48, Congers, NY 10920-9856, call 1-800-678-9691, or email us at sojourners@cambeywest.com (allow six weeks to process any address change). **POSTMASTER: Send address changes to:** *Sojourners*, PO Box 48, Congers, NY 10920-9856.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES

U.S.: \$39.95 one year print (for first-class mail, \$50). Digital subscriptions to *Sojourners* are available for \$19.95 at sojo.net/subscribe. **Australia:** \$78 one year (via air mail, paid in Australian currency, and sent to MediaCom, PO Box 610, Unley 5061 SA). **New Zealand:** \$97 one year (via air mail, paid in New Zealand currency, and sent to MediaCom, PO Box 9483, Wellington, NZ); email admin@mediacom.org.au. **Canada:** \$49.95 one year (paid in USD). **All other international** (six to eight weeks delivery): \$59.95 one year. **Air service overseas** (two to three weeks delivery): \$69.95 one year. Except where noted, payable in U.S. currency.

NEWSSTAND CIRCULATION

Newsstand circulation through Districor Magazine Distribution Services. For more information, call (905) 619-6565, fax (905) 619-2903, or email mraucci@districor.com.

ADVERTISING

Advertisement in *Sojourners* does not imply editorial endorsement. For information on display advertising in *Sojourners*, please write to: Advertising, *Sojourners*, 408 C Street NE, Washington, DC 20002; advertising@sojo.net, or visit sojo.net.

SUBMISSIONS

Submission guidelines can be found at: sojo.net/write. Please direct poetry to the Poetry Editor at poetry@sojo.net and books, music, and reviews to the Review Editor by post (address below) or at reviews@sojo.net. No submissions will be returned.

Printed in the U.S.A. on recycled paper. All content copyright ©2022 *Sojourners* 408 C Street NE, Washington, DC 20002. Phone (202) 328-8842





1

GRAIN OF SALT

BY JIM RICE

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

When the Washington Football Team announced its new name in February, some longtime activists were less than impressed. “The way the franchise and its fans act like the past half-century never happened,” responded Amanda Blackhorse, a member of the Navajo Nation, “like we’re supposed to cheer for something that should have happened decades ago.” For Blackhorse and many others, a symbolic step like a name change—which the team’s leadership was forced to take, “kicking and screaming,” in the face of a campaign that began in the 1960s—“feels hollow” without genuine action to back it up, beginning with acknowledging the damage and making real efforts to repair the harm done to communities.

But getting rid of offensive names, while not a replacement for reparative, structural change, isn’t without significance. And it’s not only about sports

**A SYMBOLIC STEP
LIKE A NAME CHANGE
FEELS HOLLOW
WITHOUT GENUINE
ACTION TO BACK IT UP.**

“FOR CHURCH BODIES, IDENTITY QUESTIONS ARE THEOLOGICAL MATTERS.”

franchises—many religious institutions have their own work to do, often involving legacies that go back centuries. Princeton Theological Seminary confronted just such a case earlier this year concerning its chapel named in honor of Samuel Miller, the seminary’s second professor. The Presbyterian theologian presumably taught his students about the Bible and what it means to follow Christ—while using enslaved labor and opposing abolition. In January, as Heath Carter explains (p. 15), Black seminarians at Princeton led a movement to demand that the school remove Miller’s name from the chapel. “We decided early on as a community that we would not worship in the chapel” under the name of someone who “did not believe that Black and white people could live in community” and led the effort to send free Black people back to Africa, Rev. Tamesha Mills, moderator of the Association of Black Seminarians at Princeton, told *Sojourners*. “There’s no reason why any building, especially our sacred place of worship, should be named after someone who has that

theological stance.” A week after a student protest outside the chapel, the seminary’s board of trustees voted unanimously “to disassociate the name of Samuel Miller from the chapel.”

Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., on the other hand, announced in fall 2020 that it would *not* rename buildings that honor its founders, who enslaved 50 people between them. Seminary president Al Mohler praised the founders’ “theological orthodoxy” and said “we stand with them in theological conviction, period.” Apparently, to Mohler and the seminary leadership, enslaving people isn’t a theological problem. Other Southern Baptists disagreed. Dwight McKissic, pastor of Cornerstone Baptist Church in Texas, decried the “moral inconsistency” of celebrating and honoring “men stealers and child abusers” and said the institution was “in effect upholding their legacy of being theological and practical proponents and defenders of white supremacy and Black inferiority.”

Who we recognize on our buildings, or with statues and monuments—often justified by invoking “legacy” and “tradition”—says less about history than it does about who we are and what our values are now. For churches and religious institutions, these identity questions are theological matters. It’s not just hypocrisy to claim to preach the gospel while honoring those who act in stark contrast to its central tenets. It gives lie to the very heart of our faith. ✱



Jim Rice is editor of *Sojourners* magazine.

Earn a Certificate of Continuing Education in PASTORAL MINISTRY AND SOCIAL ISSUES

Preparing Church leaders to address current
social justice issues impacting the world

Visit lextheo.edu
to find out more!

lexington
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

What can you do with an MA in Social Justice?

Ask Alexander Clemetson

Director of Strategic Development, SEA Change
Founder and Executive Director, Together We Compost

With his 2021 MA in Social Justice from MTSO, Alexander has founded a composting service and overseen the creation of a Fresh Market, offering fresh, free, healthy produce as a resource in partnership with Columbus' Linden community. Now he's guiding SEA Change through strategic implementation of long-term goals and projects helping social entrepreneurs solidify their impact.



"The MA in Social Justice features a lot of hands-on engagement – not just talking through justice but applying your passion in practical ways that make a real difference. It has equipped me to combat injustice, and it's connected me with others who are doing the work."

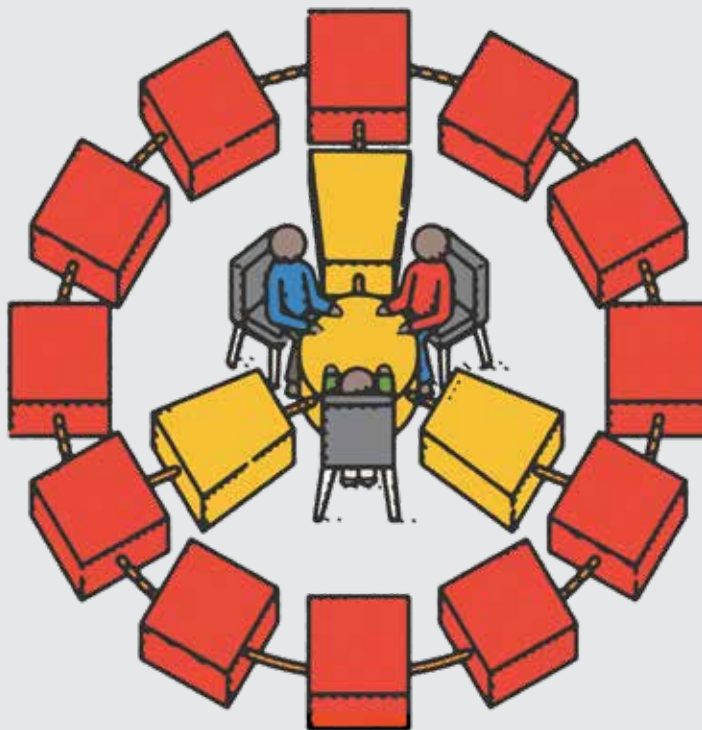


Attend on campus
or fully online
www.mtso.edu/socialjustice

Master of Divinity
MA in Counseling Ministries
MA in Practical Theology
MA in Social Justice
Master of Theological Studies
Doctor of Ministry

BLOCKCHAIN AND NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT

The time is now for ethical leadership in digital diplomacy.



2

The international community is scrambling to salvage the 2015 Iran nuclear deal after the United States withdrew from it in 2018 and reimposed harsh sanctions on Iran. At stake is how much sanctions relief to offer in return for robust international oversight of Iran's nuclear program. Blockchain technology allows us to fundamentally reframe this question: What if countries could offer real-time visibility of their nuclear programs in return for *positive financial incentives*?

Blockchain is an information management tool for governing large networks in low-trust environments. Uniquely, however, it can both *facilitate* and *financially incentivize* cooperation among nontrusting parties. This suggests a potential role for blockchain in normalizing habits of international cooperation, including by helping build trust in nuclear nonproliferation and disarmament agreements.

At least three attributes of blockchain are relevant in that regard. First, participants in a blockchain network can share control of governance mechanisms, including

decision-making, record-keeping, and transaction processing. This prevents anyone from altering the network rules or the common accounting ledger without first achieving consensus.

Second, the software's unique method for recording transactions—grouping transaction data into cryptographically secured “blocks” and linking them sequentially into a “chain”—means that each data block is partially defined by every preceding block, so changing *any* data alters the *entire* subsequent record. Combined, these mechanisms make it extremely difficult to secretly tamper with a blockchain, deterring attempts to do so. A blockchain thus creates a definitive source of shared “truth” that participants can trust without needing to trust each other, enabling norms of transparency, verification, and data integrity—nontrivial capabilities in a “post-truth” world. For example, blockchain could help to sustain a robust system for tracking nuclear material by creating an immutable record of its chain of custody.

Third, blockchains reward rule-compliant participation by issuing tokens (such as cryptocurrencies) that are redeemable for national currencies. This could be used to create *positive financial incentives* for disarmament cooperation, making peace a profitable business and inverting the incentives of the permanent nuclear war economy. This would complement nuclear weapons divestment campaigns by enabling citizens and corporations to earn money through societal verification of disarmament, using a “verification coin” to reward participation. Financial incentives matter because nuclear disarmament is not just a technical challenge of getting rid of bombs—we know how to do that. As international law expert F.S. Dunn wrote a year after the U.S. used atomic weapons in Japan, achieving disarmament will likely require “making faithful participation in an international control scheme highly profitable and its evasion or violation highly unprofitable.” By aligning financial self-interest with the collective interest and entrenching large opportunity costs for avoiding or trying to cheat a disarmament process, a blockchain-based system could create vested interests in sustaining disarmament progress and, over time, strengthen trust that others were acting in good faith.

Given the power of digital technologies,

BLOCKCHAIN COULD HELP TO SUSTAIN A ROBUST SYSTEM FOR TRACKING NUCLEAR MATERIAL.

however, it is also essential to consider their risks, including the risk of exacerbating societal injustices through “coded bias.” For example, researcher Joy Buolamwini discovered that facial recognition software does not see dark-skinned faces accurately. And experts at UN Women note that blockchain developers “are mostly men from developed economies that seem to outnumber not only women, but also other diverse populations.” As Pope Francis writes, “technological products are not neutral, for they create a framework which ends up conditioning lifestyles and shaping social possibilities along the lines dictated by the interests of certain powerful groups. Decisions which may seem purely instrumental are in reality decisions about the kind of society we want to build.”

The church provides important ethical leadership on disarmament in championing the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. But there is also an urgent need for ethical leadership on new technologies. The church could provide this leadership by highlighting how power and privilege shape new technologies and seeking to include historically marginalized populations in their development. Approached in this way, blockchain allows us to imagine and build more transparent, democratic, and equitable systems that truly serve a just peace. ❖

Lyndon Burford, a visiting researcher at King's College London, is a blockchain specialist on the New Technologies for Peace working group in the Vatican's COVID-19 Commission.

NONPROFIT MANAGEMENT CERTIFICATE

- Designed for students & working professionals
- Advance your career in the nonprofit sector
- Improve career prospects
- Expand your professional network

NO APPLICATION OR ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS

REGISTER TODAY!

909-748-8868

info-scs@redlands.edu

scs.redlands.edu



COMMENTARY

BY CHLOE SPECHT



BAD THEOLOGY, WORSE PRACTICE

Why do Christians perpetuate negative stereotypes of Jewish religious life?

Acts of antisemitism in the U.S. are skyrocketing. In October 2021, the American Jewish Committee released data from the largest-ever survey of Jews in the U.S. showing that during the previous 12 months, 1 in 4 Jews experienced antisemitism and 39 percent altered their behavior—such as avoiding wearing items that would identify them as Jewish—out of fear of antisemitism.

In less than four years, the U.S. has seen at least three violent antisemitic attacks on Jewish houses of worship. Eleven people were killed in 2018 at the Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh as a gunman screamed antisemitic slurs. Six months later, a man “inspired” by the massacre at the Tree of Life synagogue attacked a synagogue near San Diego. This January, an armed man spouting antisemitic conspiracy theories took hostages during the Shabbat service at Congregation Beth Israel near Dallas.

While many Christians take note of this disturbing trend with dismay, most haven’t learned how Christianity has been weaponized against Jewish people. For centuries, Jews suffered forced conversions to Christianity in the wake of imperial powers that sought to create “Christian governments” and “Christian nations.” Blood libel conspiracies often led to pogroms against Jewish communities. Christians in Nazi Germany used these conspiracies to gain support for state-sponsored extermination of European Jews. Similar conspiracies against Jews were parroted by white nationalists at the 2017 Unite the Right rally in Charlottesville, Va.

In my own Christian ministry, I hear Christians speak with bewilderment that Jewish folks only accept “half of scripture,” implying that

Hebrew scriptures are incomplete. Some Jewish and Christian scriptures overlap, and Christianity has deep roots in Judaism, but Judaism is not “Christianity Lite.” A whole and robust faith, it is one of the world’s oldest monotheistic religions, dating back nearly 4,000 years.

I have also noticed that Christians are unaware of the casual, routine antisemitism in their religious language. I’ve heard sermons in which Judaism was described inaccurately or slanderously. In one example, a preacher referred to Jewish characters in the Bible as “Orthodox Jews” (a movement in Judaism that emerged in the 19th century) who only marked the Jewish holy days because they wanted an excuse to get drunk.

Similarly, I’ve heard the religious practices of biblical figures villainized. For example, Christians often label someone a “pharisee” as a way of calling out insincere piety or self-righteousness. For many Jews, however, the Pharisees are the founders of rabbinic Judaism and hence their own spiritual forebears. Why do Christians perpetuate a negative, legalistic stereotype of Jewish religious life and ignore the positive role some Pharisees have in Christian scripture? Examples include Nicodemus (John 3:1-21), Gamaliel (Acts 5:33-39), and the apostle Paul, considered to be among the most influential people after Jesus in the history of Christianity.

In a 2019 gathering to strengthen Catholic-Jewish relations, Pope Francis specifically noted that negative images of Pharisees, “often without a concrete basis in the gospel accounts,” have been applied to Jews in general by Christians with dangerous results. “One of the most ancient and most damaging stereotypes is that of a ‘Pharisee,’ especially when used to cast Jews in a negative light,” said Pope Francis.

Jewish and Christian communities have a history of coming together in the name of justice. Love of neighbor is a religious value embedded in Jewish teaching and raised up by Jesus as a primary teaching for Christians. But to love our Jewish neighbors better, we need to know them better. To know them better, we must address our prejudices and take responsibility for their deadly consequences. ♦

Chloe Specht, donor services assistant at Sojourners, earned a Master of Divinity at Asbury Theological Seminary in Kentucky.

P

WHERE HONOR IS NOT DUE

"Prayer and protest are not two different things." Princeton Theological Seminary professor Keri L. Day's proclamation—part of a rousing sermon she preached on the first day of Black History Month—provoked applause and amens from students gathered for worship in the newly renamed Seminary Chapel.

These seminarians recognized the truth of Day's words because they had galvanized a prayerful protest to change the name of what had been known—for 129 years—as Miller Chapel. The building name honored Samuel Miller, a white Presbyterian minister who in 1813 became the second professor at Princeton Seminary. Like many of the institution's founders, Miller preached "the enormity of the evil" of chattel slavery yet opposed the movement for immediate abolition. Miller was also an enslaver who held a number of people in bondage during his tenure at the seminary. Miller believed that Black people "could never be trusted as faithful citizens." He played a key role in making Princeton Seminary the unofficial theological headquarters of the American Colonization Society, formed in 1817 to send free African Americans to Africa as an alternative to multiracial democracy.

Recently the seminary has begun to reckon with this past. In 2018 the institution published a report documenting and confessing its sinful "connections to slavery." In 2019 the board of trustees made a \$27.6 million investment in a range of initiatives that seminary president Craig M. Barnes characterized as "the beginning of our community's journey of repair."

Over the past months, students helped spur the seminary to take the next step. In November 2021, the Association of Black Seminarians (ABS), led by Rev. Tamesha



Mills, petitioned the board for the immediate removal of Miller's name from the chapel. Ahead of the January board meeting, ABS led a strikingly diverse coalition to request that the board also immediately establish "a re-naming process for all buildings on campus named after people tied to slavery."

The students backed these requests with protest in the form of prayer meetings. Students committed to fasting and vowed not to attend worship inside the chapel unless the board moved forward with the name change. Miller's stances against abolition and for "enforcing colonization of freed black slaves" do not "reflect the theological imagination and pioneering spirit of this institution," the students declared.

Princeton Seminary's board of trustees agreed. On Jan. 25, the board voted unanimously to disassociate Miller's name from the chapel and to establish a task-force "charged with developing guiding principles and decision-making rubrics for naming, renaming, and the conferring of honor" on seminary-related sites and objects.

This essential gospel work urgently needs to be taken up *within* but also *beyond* the ivory tower. Believers of color have courageously led the way, bearing a disproportionate share of the burden and blowback. While a few white churches in the U.S. are reckoning with historic entanglements in the sins of slavery, Jim Crow, housing discrimination, and more, most are not.

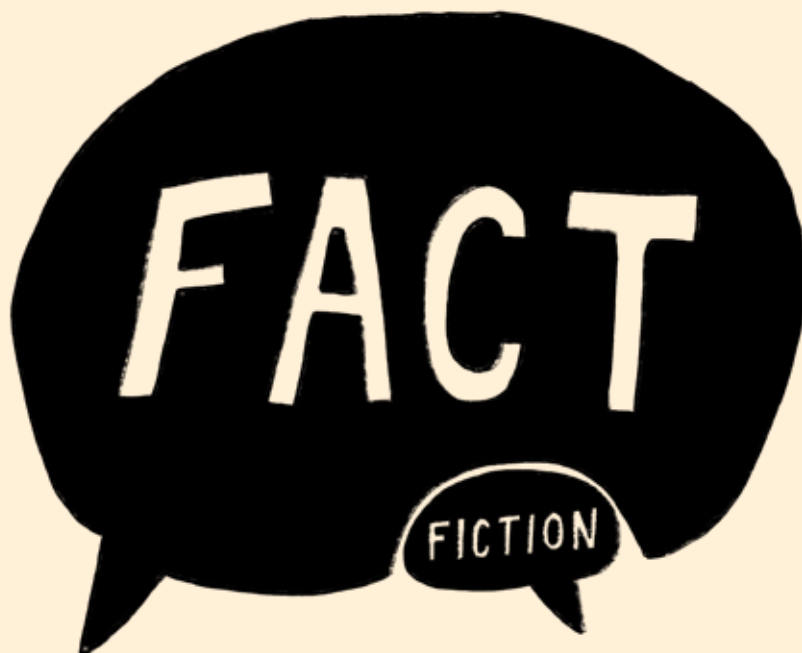
It is not too late. The process might start by asking whose names are inscribed onto the sanctuary walls and stained-glass windows. Digging into history can surface painful realities, but it can also be an engine of humility and creativity for today. The truth is that the sins of the past are rarely just in the past. As we learn more about how we got here, we may see more clearly where God would have us go.

**DIGGING INTO
HISTORY CAN SURFACE
PAINFUL REALITIES,
BUT IT CAN ALSO
BE AN ENGINE
OF CREATIVITY
FOR TODAY.**

Heath W. Carter, author of *Union Made: Working People and the Rise of Social Christianity in Chicago*, is an associate professor of American Christianity at Princeton Theological Seminary.

REALITY COUNTS DOUBLE

3



On a Sunday afternoon this winter, I sat listening to some classic bossa nova playing over a streaming service called Tidal. That last detail is important only because I spent the previous morning switching from Spotify, the dominant music streaming service, in what may be the single least effective moral statement of my life (though there are other contenders to that crown). But sometimes you just have to stand up for reality.

The Spotify kerfuffle began, as you've probably heard, when it reportedly made a \$200 million deal with Joe Rogan for the right to broadcast his podcast, a remarkably long and tendentious series of rants that included his advice that 20-somethings should not be vaccinated against the coronavirus (as well as repeated use of racist language). Rogan also had as a guest on his show the remarkably underwhelming Canadian *philosophe* Jordan Peterson who explained, incoherently, why the models that physicists have built to model the earth's climate couldn't possibly work. In response to Rogan's anti-vax rant, Neil Young and Joni Mitchell—generational icons if ever there were—pulled their music from the streaming service and others have done the same. They were

**THE REBELS OF THE '60S,
THROUGH ALL THE HAZE OF DRUGS
AND BRAVADO, WERE TAKING A
STAND ON THE SIDE OF REALITY.**

met with criticism from Roganers who called this an attempt at censorship and accused them of betraying their '60s-era anti-establishment credentials.

But here's the thing: The rebels of that era, through all the haze of drugs and brava-do, were taking a stand on the side of reality. These were the children of the first Earth Day ("they paved paradise"), demanding that we see the effect of pollution on our air and water; the children of the feminist movement, demanding that we see that women were not a delicate species apart; the children of the anti-war movement ("four dead in O-hi-o"), demanding that we see the price our ideologies were exacting at home and abroad. And, of course, they were the children of a scientific moment: Both Young and Mitchell had polio as kids, meaning that even more than the rest of us, they must shake their heads at dudes like Rogan.

The "rebels" of our moment are insistent that reality barely exists—that anyone's opinion on, say, vaccines or climate science is as useful as anyone else's. This is, in practice, a kind of nihilism, embodied best as usual by Donald Trump, the man who insisted that the "concept of global warming was created by and for the Chinese in order to make U.S. manufacturing non-competitive," and that wind turbines were causing cancer, and that perhaps we should ingest bleach. These things are not true—not even close to true, not even in the same neighborhood as truth.

We live in an odd moment when the hoariest of establishments—the Biden White House, say, or the Vatican, or public health experts, or the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change—hew relatively close to actual fact on the great questions of the day. They're not infallible (Catholic doctrine aside), and they should be challenged, but not on the grounds that every opinion counts the same. Reality counts double. ❖

Bill McKibben, founder of 350.org, is the author most recently of *Falter: Has the Human Game Begun to Play Itself Out?*

**Protect
your
prostate
health.
Know
your
risks.**



**Early detection of prostate cancer
makes all the difference.**

Should you get screened?

If you are a man 50+ years old, or are 45+ years and at increased risk, our physicians at **MedStar Georgetown Cancer Institute** recommend regular screenings. All it takes is a simple blood test. Your primary care physician or a urologist can perform it right in their office.

You may be at increased risk if you:

- Have the BRCA gene mutation.
- Have a close relative, such as a father or brother, who has had prostate cancer.
- Are a smoker.
- Are African American. Black men have a 1 in 6 chance of getting prostate cancer, compared to 1 in 8 men overall.
- Are obese.

**Talk to your doctor or
schedule an appointment today.**

Call **888-822-5098**, or visit
[MedStarHealth.org/PSAScreening](https://www.MedStarHealth.org/PSAScreening).



MedStar Health

FROM THE DUST

BY LIUAN HUSKA

RETHINKING PROPERTY RIGHTS



S

Seven years ago this month, I became a landowner. My husband and I put our names on the deed to a quarter-acre plot of land in an unassuming Chicago suburb. According to U.S. property law and common understandings, I have a right to do what I want with this land, even “up to

heaven and down to hell.” That phrase goes back to a medieval Roman jurist’s proclamation that whoever owns the soil also owns what’s above and beneath, an idea that sociologist Colin Jerolmack has explored in depth (no pun intended) in his book by the same name about fracking in a rural Pennsylvania town.

As Jerolmack documents, the United States is “the only country in the world where private individuals own a majority of the subsurface estate.” These laws are the confluence of America’s enshrinement of individualism, skepticism of big government, and confidence in the “invisible hand” of the market to work to everyone’s benefit.

I witness the effects of this policy up close. In parts of my town, the groundwater is contaminated by a factory that dumped radioactive sludge from mineral extraction into the soil they presumably owned. On the land under my name, I am wary of growing food in the soil be-

I’VE STARTED PUTTING QUOTATION MARKS AROUND THE “OUR” WHEN I THINK ABOUT “OUR” LAND.

cause it contains higher-than-usual levels of arsenic and lead, probably deposited by the decades of trains going through the now-defunct tracks behind our house. I purchased truckloads of topsoil from elsewhere to plant a garden.

Like Jerolmack, I’ve been made starkly aware of the impossibility of “live and let live” in an age where the diffuse environmental impacts of individual land use decisions have piled up into an enormous planetary crisis. Those of us in the U.S. cannot “let live” without drastically rearranging how we, as decision-makers in the country arguably most responsible for climate change, live. If we want to be good neighbors, we must rethink our “rights” to the land.

I’ve started putting quotation marks around the “our” when I think about “our” land. Take the stands of trees around the edges of “our” lot. They break the biting winter wind and shade us from the baking summer sun. But these trees benefit not only my family. They filter the air and water that many animals and people will eventually breathe and drink. They hold the soil in place and house beneficial insects, critters, bacteria, and fungi in their limbs and roots. Can I consider the impact to life besides my own when I decide what to do on “my” land?

If we are to heal our ecological wounds, we need to shift from settler views of individual land ownership to Indigenous views of communal land stewardship. It will be cumbersome and inconvenient to consult others. But I take heart in this promise from the First Nations Version of Matthew 5:5: “Creator’s blessing rests on the ones who walk softly and in a humble manner. The earth, land, and sky will welcome them and always be their home.” ✦

Liuan Huska is a freelance journalist and the author of *Hurting Yet Whole: Reconciling Body and Spirit in Chronic Pain and Illness*.



Bicentennial Pilgrimages

France • England • Salzburg • The Holy Land

Book Now to Experience the Most Inspiring Destinations

Plan your 2022 adventures with Virginia Theological Seminary. We offer a diverse portfolio of travel opportunities, including exciting pilgrimages to the Holy Land, as well as carefully designed new itineraries. Limited spaces are available for these pilgrimages, which are part of Virginia Theological Seminary's historic Bicentenary during 2022-2023.

Who is better at sharing the wisdom of the Desert Fathers and Mothers than the Rt. Rev. Frank T. Griswold III, 25th Presiding Bishop of The Episcopal Church? Having renowned scholar Malcolm Miller at Chartres is as good as it gets! Who better to lead a "treasure hunt" in England than the Very Rev. Ian S. Markham, Ph.D.? Advent in Salzburg will provide memories for a lifetime!

**For more information, please contact Victoria Elie
at (703) 461-1730 or velie@vts.edu.**

Space is limited.

Gothic France

May 13–23, 2022

Pilgrimage to the Holy Land

August 11–22, 2022

"Grace & Gardens" in England's 'green and pleasant land'

September 8–20, 2022

Pilgrimages to the Holy Land

October 15–26, 2022

October 27–November 7, 2022

Advent in Salzburg

November 27–December 2, 2022

Epiphany Pilgrimages to the Holy Land

January 7–18, 2023

January 19–30, 2023

CALLED. EQUIPPED. SENT.

At North Park Theological Seminary, you're prepared for ministry not only in the classroom, but in community.

"My North Park education not only offers depth and breadth of rich engagement with global and historical Christianity but is equipping me with tools to contribute articulately as a shaping agent within church and society. Beyond this, the North Park community is dynamic and diverse—an ideal place for formation!"
—MATTHEW PODSZUS, MASTER OF ARTS IN THEOLOGICAL STUDIES

- ▶ North Park Theological Seminary offers programs that are affordable and accessible.
- ▶ Located in one of the most diverse zip codes in the country, North Park's Chicago campus is enriched by having the world at our doorstep.
- ▶ Learn from some of the leading minds in biblical studies, evangelism, cross-cultural ministry, and spiritual formation.

Apply Now

www.northpark.edu/seminary

- ▶ MDiv or MATS
- ▶ MA in Christian Formation or Christian Ministry
- ▶ Add an MBA or MNA to your seminary degree
- ▶ Certificates in Transformative Justice, Intercultural Ministry, Spiritual Direction, and more!

Contact Us

(773) 244-6229 or (800) 964-0101
semadmissions@northpark.edu



NORTH PARK
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

EYEWITNESS

4

**“AN ANIMAL
COMPANION MAY
BE THE DIFFERENCE
BETWEEN A LIFE THAT
IS POSSIBLE AND A
LIFE THAT IS BARELY
BEARABLE.”**



PART OF THE FAMILY

During an animal blessing, I place my hand on the animal somewhere that I've been told is safe. It may be the top of the head. I may be holding a paw. I may say something like, "Sue, thank you for bringing Bandit to the service today. We want to recognize the specialness of this relationship. We want to recognize how you have blessed Bandit and how Bandit has blessed you." Some people may be remembering an animal who was in their life and is no longer.

It's become so much different now that animals are truly parts of households, and not a friend who's left outside with a doghouse. We have taken these beings into our homes and said, *You're not just a guest here. You're part of the family.*

We may become more isolated as we age, and our social groupings may get smaller because of death or a variety of reasons. The things we used to do we don't do as well anymore. We begin to isolate more and more, and these animals who are living with us sometimes are the biggest connection to life that we have. During the pandemic, people of all ages have gone out to shelters and brought animals home. [When a person is alone], an animal companion may be the difference between a life that is possible and a life that is barely bearable.

I think as we become more familiar with animals in our homes that leads us to animals outside of the home. It leads us to [think about] climate change and how animal agriculture is hurting the planet in such a way that we may not recover. There are some dire circumstances in our future, and we may ask animals to comfort us more and more.

When I come home, even if I'm not feeling my best, that animal greets me in a way that says we know each other. Dogs are like, *oh gosh, you're home. I'm so glad you're home.* My spouse may be glad I'm home, but she doesn't do a dance like the pup does. ✕

Russell Elleven is chaplain to the Unitarian Universalist Animal Ministry. He spoke with Sojourners' Jenna Barnett.





Activists in Hollywood picket the 2004 film *Million Dollar Baby* for its depiction of disability. Cathy Cole / Flickr

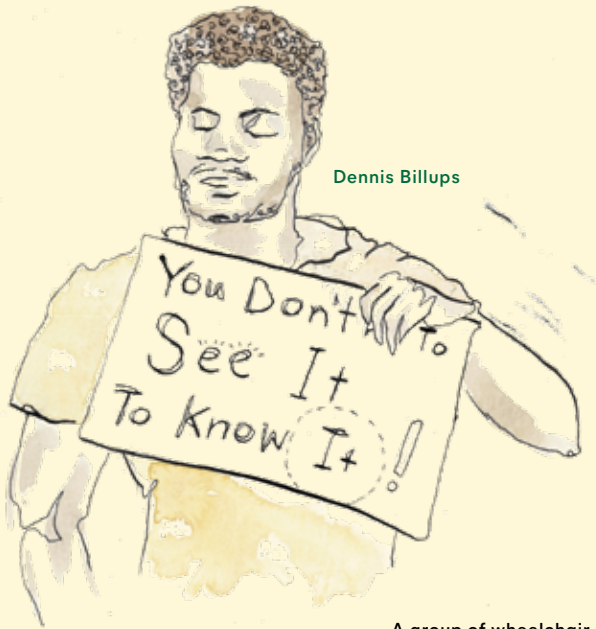


Brad Lomax

Protesters gather outside the federal building in San Francisco in April 1977 before beginning a 26-day sit-in. / Anthony Tusler

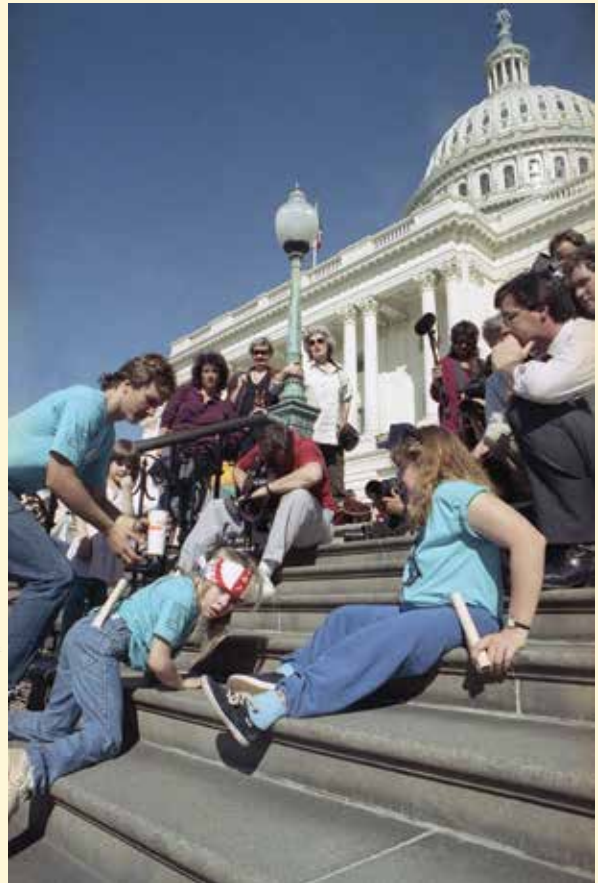


Illustrations by Indigo Ayling



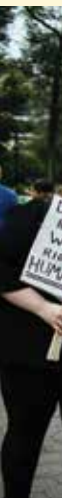
Dennis Billups

A group of wheelchair-using activists led by 8-year-old Jennifer Keelan, left, crawl up the steps of the U.S. Capitol in 1990. / AP Photo / Jeff Markowitz



Letiah Fraser

Occupiers and supporters gather in San Francisco's Civic Center Plaza to celebrate the signing of the Section 504 regulations in 1977. / *San Francisco Examiner* via Bancroft Library





Harold Wilke

A participant in the
2018 Disability Pride
Parade in New York
City / Alamy Stock
Photo / Nolan Ryan
Trowe



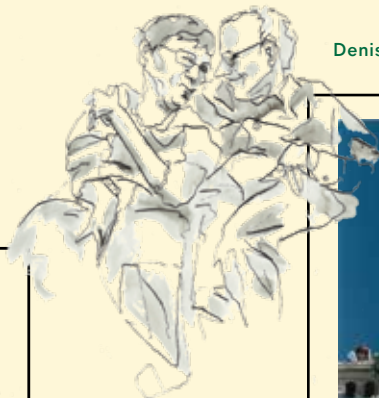
Mary Lou Breslin

By Aleja Hertzler-McCain

Bodies on the Line

Disability rights sit-ins in the 1970s educated America and launched a civil rights movement. At the 45th anniversary, the church still lags behind.

Diversability community members at a 2018 Disability Pride Parade in New York City / Jennifer Brister for Diversability LLC



Denise and Neil Jacobson

Gallaudet students rally at the U.S. Capitol in March 1988 to demand the appointment of a Deaf president to the university. / Courtesy Gallaudet University Library Deaf Collections and Archive



On Good Friday 1977,

Dennis Billups and Judy Heumann, along with six other disabled activists, were on hunger strike. It was their fourth day occupying the San Francisco Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW) alongside more than 100 protesters. The eight activists did not break their fast three days later when many of their Christian counterparts in the sit-in celebrated Easter. Instead, they continued without food, waiting with hope for their own improbable victory despite seemingly insurmountable odds.

The 26-day occupation of the HEW building was the longest nonviolent occupation of a federal building in U.S. history. In the early 1970s, disabled people were routinely excluded from public transportation, libraries, and other public spaces. Four out of five disabled children were not enrolled in public education; many states had laws excluding students with disabilities from public schools. The landmark Rehabilitation Act of 1973 prohibited discrimination based on disability in programs conducted by federal agencies, in the employment practices of the federal government and its contractors, and in programs that received federal financial aid. Section 504 of the Rehab Act contained the ban on discrimination against disabled people by recipients of federal funds. Yet four years had passed since 1973, and the Carter administration still had not signed regulations to enforce Section 504. Disabled people were losing patience.

When the American Coalition of Citizens with Disabilities heard that federal officials planned to change the drafted regulations to permit “separate but equal” facilities and to remove protections for people in drug and alcohol recovery, the coalition called for sit-ins in federal buildings across the country. Many sit-ins ended quickly, but the San Francisco sit-in continued until HEW Secretary Joseph Califano signed the originally drafted federal regulations into law.

The stakes of a such a long sit-in were especially high for disabled people. Disability rights leader and 504 sit-in organizer Heumann wrote that many participants

risked “our health and our lives to be without catheters, back-up ventilators, and attendants.” Some protesters lived with the physical consequences of the protest for years.

THE STRENGTH OF COALITION

Replicating hostile tactics that ended the Washington, D.C. sit-in, San Francisco officials cut the phone lines and prevented food or attendants from entering the building. At one point, the occupiers bravely remained in the building during a false bomb threat. But the protesters had many powerful supporters on the outside of the building.

As HEW officials restricted communication with those on the outside, the Butterfly Brigade, a gay men’s group who patrolled city streets to prevent violence against gay people, snuck walkie-talkies into the building. Deaf occupiers leaned out

the windows to sign to supporters outside.

San Francisco Mayor George Moscone (later assassinated along with Harvey Milk, the first openly gay man elected to public office in California) insisted that HEW officials allow food inside the building, and he continued to vigorously support the protesters throughout the occupation. Organizations across the Bay Area came together to feed the occupiers, with the Black Panther Party providing hot dinners in support of occupying Panthers Brad Lomax and Chuck Jackson. Other groups who provided food included Berkeley’s lesbian-owned Brick Hut Café collective, the Delancey Street Foundation (a residential rehabilitation center for substance abusers), the Chicano group Mission Rebels, and local branches of McDonald’s and Safeway.

Religious groups also sustained the protesters. According to Heumann, pastor Cecil Williams was one of the “staunchest

The 26-day occupation of the HEW building was the longest nonviolent occupation of a federal building in U.S. history.



Cecil Williams



supporters” of the sit-in, and his church, Glide Memorial in the Tenderloin neighborhood, stepped up to provide food. The head of the San Francisco Council of Churches entered the building every Sunday to hold services.

Heumann told *Sojourners* the entire sit-in was spiritual because “we had faith in each other.” Dennis Billups, a 504 protester who led the group in meditation, songs, and chants, described the Christian and Jewish religious gatherings as “passionate.” Jewish protesters entered the building during Passover, and, as they celebrated the Hebrews’ liberation from Egyptian oppression in the elevator of the HEW building, they prayed for their own liberation from ableist exclusion. Billups recalled the moments of prayer, meditation, and conversation as crucial for strengthening cross-disability solidarity because, as he told *Sojourners*, they “linked hand and hand, heart to heart, mind to mind, and spirit to spirit together.”

When the San Francisco occupiers decided to send a group of representatives to Washington to increase pressure on Secretary Califano to sign the regulations, they marshalled community support again.



Judy Heumann

Willy Dicks, a member of the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAM), heard Williams preach at Glide Memorial about the sit-in, and he convinced IAM to provide travel funds, logistical support, and food. The Black Panther Party paid the travel costs of its members. After touching down in Washington, the group made their way to Califano’s house, where they sang hymns and held a candlelight vigil throughout the night. Luther Place Memorial Church allowed IAM to do accessibility remodeling and provided the protesters with a place to sleep for the rest of their trip. Luther Place pastor John Steinbruck amplified the pressure on Califano and President Carter by inviting them to a prayer breakfast with the protesters. He received no response.

PAYING IT FORWARD

After the protesters had been in the capital for 10 days, Califano yielded to their demands and signed the 504 regulations—undiluted from the original drafts. The 504 regulations “opened up a whole new world of access,” Denise Jacobson, an activist with cerebral palsy who lobbied for the passage of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, told *Sojourners*. Her husband, Neil Jacobson, a disability advocate who also has cerebral palsy, added, “Whenever I see a ramp to a building or a wide bathroom stall, a wheelchair user getting onto a bus, or parents with disabilities playing with their kids at an accessible playground, I think about Section 504” and the other disability rights legislation that Section 504 inspired.

By changing the national conversation around disability and shaping how disability activists organized, Section 504’s regulations created the framework for the passage of the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), a civil rights law that prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities in *all* areas of public life, with notable exceptions. Before Section 504, many Americans viewed a disabled person’s impairment as the reason they were excluded from public life. After the implementation of Section 504, it became clear that stigma around disability and ableist structures were responsible for disabling those in the disability community and that society bore the responsibility of inclusion. This understanding shaped the definition of disability in Section 504 and in the ADA, which included not only people with impairment, but also people with a history of impairment and people

who were perceived to be impaired. As Mary Lou Breslin, a lead organizer of the San Francisco sit-in wrote in 1997, “This dramatic recognition of disability as substantially a social construct owes its birth-right to Section 504, and the independent living and disability civil rights movement.”

The refusal in 1977 of protesters with mobility and sensory disabilities to allow the exclusion of people with addictions from Section 504’s civil rights protections set a precedent for the fight for the ADA. Disabled people fought for each other’s rights together, even though different groups had different accessibility needs. As disabled activists pushed for a law to extend Section 504’s protections to the private sector, they maintained those cross-disability coalitions. In March 1990, wheelchair-using activists captured national attention during the “Capitol Crawl” when they set aside their wheelchairs and other mobility aids and crawled up the Capitol steps to demonstrate how inaccessible architecture impacts disabled people. Congress swiftly passed the Americans with Disabilities Act that extended disability rights protections throughout the private sector. More of society started learning how to take responsibility for the social inclusion of disabled Americans through accommodations.

I work at Sojourners today because of disability rights legislation. When I became disabled as a teenager, I experienced some of the same stigma and ableism that the 504 protesters fought against, but the legal protection that they fought *for* kept me in school. Like many other disabled people in the ADA generation, I finished high school and college and then found a job because of the civil rights laws that disabled protesters fought for.

DISABILITY INCLUSION IN THE CHURCH

There were a few church leaders such as Harold Wilke, a disabled United Church of Christ minister, who recognized the transformative potential of the ADA and fought for its passage. But the vast majority of the institutional church used its power to protect itself *from* the ADA. For example, the National Council of Churches, the National Association of Evangelicals, and other religious organizations lobbied aggressively for religious exemptions to the ADA. While the National Council of Churches supported the passage of the ADA overall, it was a lead signatory in demanding religious exemptions. While the National Association of Evangelicals adopted a resolution in 1989



Judy Heumann and Kitty Cone

Disabled people fought for
each other's rights together.



entitled “Ministry to Persons with Disabilities,” it did not support the ADA publicly and lobbied fiercely that, without a religious exemption, the state risked “burdening the church with unnecessary costs” and suppressing “in religious communities the exercise of traditional behavioral disciplines with respect to alcohol, drugs, gambling, or sexual immorality.” Ultimately, this lobbying was successful. Religious groups today are exempt from the ADA.

Some churches have used the ADA exemption to blatantly discriminate against disabled people. Churches have fired employees because of breast cancer, narcolepsy, depression, and bipolar disorder—and used the religious exemption to do so. Many churches continue to lack ramps and pew cutouts for wheelchairs users. Disabled people sit through ableist preaching and receive unsolicited prayers for their “healing.” Church of the Nazarene pastor Letiah Fraser, who has cerebral palsy, put it bluntly when she told *Sojourners*, “The church is lagging behind mainstream society.”

Religious communities should be places “where people can bring their whole selves,” said Heumann, who is Jewish. Religious institutions have a duty to commit to accessibility, regardless of their current legal obligations, “because they should be examples in our communities of what is just and right.”

To create a community that is just and right, churches must not only include disabled people, but also seek their leadership. Erin Raffety, a Presbyterian pastor and anthropologist, argues that many churches lack vitality because they view people with disabilities as objects of charitable programs (run by nondisabled people) instead of as valuable leaders. Fraser believes new congregations and church plants, where her pastoral leadership and experience as a Black woman with a disability has been intentionally sought out, have been the *only* places where she can actively shape “the culture around disability theology.” Traditional churches have been too resistant to change.

Nancy L. Eiesland, theologian and author of *The Disabled God*, saw disability theology as key to dismantling “a dou-

ble-minded stance that holds up the disabled as objects of ministry and adulation for overcoming the very barriers the church has helped to construct.” According to Eiesland, disability theology prods the church to move beyond accommodation to develop an inclusive liberating theology centered around the systemic and social needs of its members of every disability status and reflecting Christ who rises with his wounds intact. “Disability not only does not contradict the human-divine integrity, it becomes a new model of wholeness and a symbol for solidarity,” Eiesland wrote. In understanding disability, we can turn to scripture. Denise Jacobson, who is Jewish, pointed out that “there are many people in the Bible that have a disability,” including Moses, Isaac, and Jacob. Understanding these stories can dissolve myths about the normal body and mind. As Fraser noted, “God has created all bodies in God’s image.”

THE CHURCH’S WORK FOR DISABILITY JUSTICE

“Disabled people come from all communities,” Heumann emphasized. Dis-

ability justice is enmeshed with issues facing all marginalized communities. It builds on the disability rights movement’s work by engaging in cross-disability and cross-movement coalitions, while also building beyond the legal framework of rights, a framework that does not adequately address the oppression of multiply marginalized disabled people. “The white supremacist structure wants us all to segregate,” Fraser told *Sojourners*, underscoring the importance of working in solidarity for disability justice.

Disabled people are disproportionately impacted by almost every type of violence and injustice in the U.S., especially compared to their nondisabled peers. Working-age disabled people are more than twice as likely to live in poverty. Disabled people are three times more likely to experience physical abuse or sexual assault, and people with intellectual disabilities are seven times more likely to be sexually assaulted. Deaf and disabled Black people are especially at risk for police violence, where “compliance culture” justifies the use of force against anyone who does not respond immediately to police commands as a nondisabled person would. Studies estimate that between one-third and one-half of people killed by the police are disabled. By recognizing the intersectional nature of the oppression that multiply marginalized disabled people face, we can seek out leadership in communities of the most impacted. They are the experts through their lived experience.

During the San Francisco sit-in, the Black Panthers, gay and lesbian organizations, and a wide coalition of others stepped forward because they understood that our liberation is intertwined. Glide Memorial’s Cecil Williams and Luther Place’s John Steinbruck understood this too. Together with their churches, these pastors demonstrated Christian solidarity, which the broader church also should have shown.

April 2022 marks the 45th anniversary of the San Francisco 504 sit-in. It’s time for the entire church to commit to intersectional disability justice, not only to repent for the harm the church’s ableism has done but because disability justice is at the heart of the gospel. ✦

Aleja Hertzler-McCain, an editorial assistant at *Sojourners* magazine, co-founded a disability peer mentoring program at Pomona College in California.



THE SACRED WORK OF REMEMBERING





PEOPLE OF FAITH ARE RESURRECTING THE STORIES
OF LYNCHING VICTIMS—ONE PLAQUE AT A TIME.

BY CAROL KURUVILLA

There are two churches in Newton County, Miss., that bear the name “Good Hope.” The first, Good Hope Baptist Church, was founded by white slaveholders in the 1850s. At least 20 African Americans were members of that church, forced to worship God alongside those who kept them enslaved. After the Civil War, Black members of the church banded together to form an independent community, the Freedman Settlement of Good Hope. One of their first goals as emancipated people was to establish a church of their own. Against immeasurable odds, they founded Good Hope Missionary Baptist Church in 1908. But that same year, terror threatened to rip the nascent community apart. Three congregants—William Fielder, Dee Dawkins, and Frank Johnson—were brutally tortured and lynched by a mob of at least 50 white men. The three were targeted for being associated with a Black sharecropper accused of killing his white employer. The mob went on to wreak havoc on Black neighborhoods. Traumatized by the violence and faced with restrictive Black codes that preserved white supremacy in the South, many members of the Freedman Settlement of Good Hope fled north.

But their families’ connection to that sacred ground didn’t waver. For more than 100 years, on the first Saturday in August their descendants have travelled from across the U.S. to the church for a revival. They sing, pray, and gather for a fish fry and soul food. They share news about marriages, births, and deaths. They listen to sermons and care for the cemetery where their ancestors are buried. And most importantly, they remember.

Last August, descendants gathered at Good Hope Missionary Baptist Church in Newton County for another reason: to unveil a historical marker honoring the memories of Fielder, Dawkins, and Johnson. The marker describes the terror that was unleashed on their community and the failure of local law enforcement to hold anyone accountable for the deaths and the destruction of Black property. Darrell Fielder, the great-great-grandson of William Fielder, told *Sojourners* he believes Good Hope Missionary Baptist Church was the appropriate space for “resurrecting” the legacies of these three victims. “It is the one space where Black people could practice a liberating faith and speak in frank terms about injustices,” Fielder said. “In placing these markers on church ground, we are honoring these martyrs and letting them know that God was always with them.”

The historical marker at Good Hope Missionary Baptist Church is part of a nationwide effort to acknowledge the racial violence embedded in U.S. history—and to examine how that legacy has shaped the present. Launched by the Equal Justice Initiative (EJI), an Alabama-based nonprofit, the Community Remembrance Project (CRP) has helped communities install more than 65 historical markers honoring lynching victims. In many of these locations, people of faith have been deeply involved in raising awareness and building diverse coalitions to tell the truth about the past.

Joyce Salter Johnson, 82, was born on the Freedman Settlement of Good Hope and baptized in a little pond behind the church. Inspired by the verse from Proverbs instructing people to “not forsake your friend or the friend of your parent” (27:10), Salter Johnson, a descendant of Frank Johnson, has spent 40 years piecing together the history of the families of the Freedman Settlement of Good Hope. In 2017, she published a book, *The Freedmen Settlement of Good Hope Mississippi: The Beginning*, drawing from church records, journal entries, census data, wills and other documents, and interviews with descendants. After hearing about the EJI project, Salter Johnson convened a neighborhood coalition to install the historical marker. It was a coalition so wide that it even included members of what Salter Johnson calls the “white Good Hope Church.” Salter Johnson told *Sojourners* she hopes this effort will inspire communities to work together toward “justice for all.”

“REMEMBRANCE WORK IS A RADICAL ACT OF LOVE.”



Joyce Salter Johnson, a descendant of lynching victim Frank Johnson, places flowers on the EJI historical marker in Newton County, Miss. / Bianca Moorman / *The Meridian Star*



Dan Dawkins holds a jar with soil honoring his ancestor, Dee Dawkins, during a 2019 ceremony in Mississippi. / EJI



Curtis Fielder holds a photo of his grandmother, Annabelle Fielder. His grandfather, William Fielder, was lynched in 1908. / EJI

“We can help ensure that such tragedies do not exist as we move forward in the 21st century with great challenges and a tremendous need for strong and creative leaders,” Salter Johnson said. “It can help move our communities toward reconciliation of our past and present.”

FACING THE PAST

In the years that followed the Civil War, white communities in the South used violent, public acts of torture to terrorize,

humiliate, and control newly emancipated African Americans and their neighborhoods. Black Southerners were lynched for resisting economic exploitation, for trumped-up allegations of criminal activity, for perceived violations of white supremacist social norms—or for merely being associated with someone who was rumored to have done these things. White mobs seized people from jails and courtrooms without fear of repercussion, since local officials of the time often tolerated or condoned these attacks and failed to

hold perpetrators accountable for their crimes. Nearly 6,500 racial terror lynchings occurred across 26 states between 1865 and 1950, according to EJI. In addition to the loss of life, these extrajudicial killings had the effect of enforcing racial segregation and preserving the ideology of white supremacy.

Black churches became powerful sites for organizing and activism, including Warren Temple United Methodist Church in LaGrange, Ga. On Sept. 7, 1940, a young man named Austin Callaway was thrown

in LaGrange's city jail. A band of armed white men snatched Callaway out of the jail, shot him repeatedly, and left him to die on a rural road. The reasons for Callaway's arrest are unclear. No police records exist that describe the allegations, and the police failed to publish an investigative report on his murder.

Rev. L.W. Strickland, who was pastor of Warren Temple UMC at the time, tried to draw attention to the crime, establishing a local chapter of the NAACP to bring together community members for mass meetings. Although Callaway's murderers were never held accountable for their crime, Strickland's activism had an enduring impact. Years later, in 2017, community leaders installed a historical marker at Warren Temple UMC honoring victims of lynching in Troup County, Ga., including Callaway. Rev. Carl Von Epps, current pastor and lifelong member of Warren Temple UMC, told *Sojourners* the marker is part of a yearslong, multipronged effort in LaGrange to acknowledge the failures of the past and chart a new way forward. The activism of local leaders led LaGrange's mayor and police chief to apologize for their predecessors' complicity in Callaway's lynching. The police chief also implemented reforms to prevent fatal police shootings of Black residents, though reports of discrimination and unjust punishment in LaGrange persist.

As someone who grew up in LaGrange and graduated from a segregated high school, Epps, 73, said he can't see the profound changes occurring in his city as "anything other than a movement of God"—and the church has faithfully worked to advance that movement. "I think we have been representative of a community church and that's what we still try to be," he said. "It gives us pride knowing that we are making a difference in our community."

A CONCERTED EFFORT

Getting the wider community on board with installing a marker is not always easy. In Tallahassee, Fla., faith leaders from three congregations joined forces to start a coalition in the area—St. John's Episcopal Church and First Presbyterian Church, two predominantly white congregations, and St. Michael and All Angels Episcopal Church, which is predominantly Black. When leaders first presented the idea, they encountered some resistance from within their own congregations and from Black leaders in the wider Tallahassee community. Some opponents to the project were

concerned that the subject was too hurtful to be remembered, according to J. Byron Greene, an African American native of Tallahassee and a member of St. Michael and All Angels. "I believe that the subject matter, lynching atrocities, is one component of the larger issue of racial degradation which still remains like [a] sore on your knee," he told *Sojourners*. "Engaging in a project like the [Community Remembrance Project] can be akin to breaking the scab."

The coalition created public forums where community members could learn more about the project, Greene said. EJI was brought in to help answer the community's questions and the coalition eventually grew to include a wide array of groups, including several predominantly African American local churches, as well as Jewish organizations, a Buddhist center, and Ile Asho Funfun, a community dedicated to the Yoruban deity Obatala. While many of the people who attended the marker installation ceremony held this past July were African American, the majority were white, Greene said, which he found encouraging. "In my opinion, the act of remembrance is twofold," he said. "It is an act to re-member, meaning to come together again ... and it is an act of

repentance, more clearly, an act of turning back to God and committing to living out the covenant of 'loving our neighbor as ourselves.' ... If we are not mindful of our common humanity, these types of atrocities can surely happen again."

THE SAME SCENE

In 1921, a young woman named Rebecca Brown Crutcher and her husband owned a thriving barbecue restaurant in Greenwood, a prosperous Black neighborhood in Tulsa, Okla. The couple had chosen a prime spot for their business, right near the train station in the heart of their beloved community.

Their lives were disrupted in late May of that year when a white mob tore through Greenwood, murdering as many as 300 residents. While the Tulsa Police Department chose to ignore the violence—and in some cases, joined in—the mob burned Black homes, places of worship, and businesses. Crutcher and her family fled for their lives on the back of a truck, leaving their business and home behind. Like many survivors of the Tulsa Race Massacre, Crutcher rarely spoke about the terror she experienced

**“WE ARE HONORING
THESE MARTYRS
AND LETTING THEM
KNOW THAT GOD
WAS ALWAYS
WITH THEM.”**



A white mob destroyed the predominantly African American Greenwood neighborhood of Tulsa, Okla., in 1921. / Alvin C. Krupnick Co. / Library of Congress



Tiffany Crutcher in Tulsa holds a photo of her great-grandmother Rebecca Brown Crutcher, who survived the 1921 race massacre. / Terence Crutcher Foundation

that day, fearful of retribution from white people. But after the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr., she told her grandson for the very first time that, “Something like that happened here, too.” Even then, decades later, Crutcher could only speak about it in a low whisper.

Though the massacre had profound effects on her family and her hometown, Tiffany Crutcher, Rebecca Brown Crutcher’s great-granddaughter, never learned about the tragedy while attending Tulsa schools. As a child, she played on the grounds of Vernon AME Church, the only structure to have survived the massacre, but had no knowledge of its history. It wasn’t until Tiffany Crutcher got to college that she learned about the destruction of “Black Wall Street.”

Then, in 2016, a police officer shot and killed Tiffany’s twin brother, Terence Crutcher. The Tulsa officer, a white woman, was later acquitted of manslaughter. Tiffany Crutcher was stunned by the parallels she saw between the lives of her brother and great-grandmother, and the fact that the fear her great-grandmother had felt back in 1921 appeared to have been passed down through the generations. “I often just wonder in my mind, how she was feeling, what she was thinking, running away from terror. And I’m thinking about my brother, what he was thinking as a mob of police officers ran toward him,” Tiffany Crutcher told *Sojourners*. “It seems like the same scene.”

After her brother’s death, Tiffany Crutcher pledged to fight for the justice denied to her family. She started a foun-

dation that advocates for criminal justice and police reform. As part of her outreach, she decided to bring Tulsa community leaders together to create a memorial for victims and survivors of the Tulsa massacre. Last year, the Tulsa Community Remembrance Coalition unveiled a historical marker outside of Vernon AME Church that describes the events leading up to the massacre, pinpoints how law enforcement failed to protect Greenwood residents, and details the displacement of more than 10,000 Black people. “If we don’t learn about what happened or know about our history, we’re doomed to repeat it,” Tiffany Crutcher said.

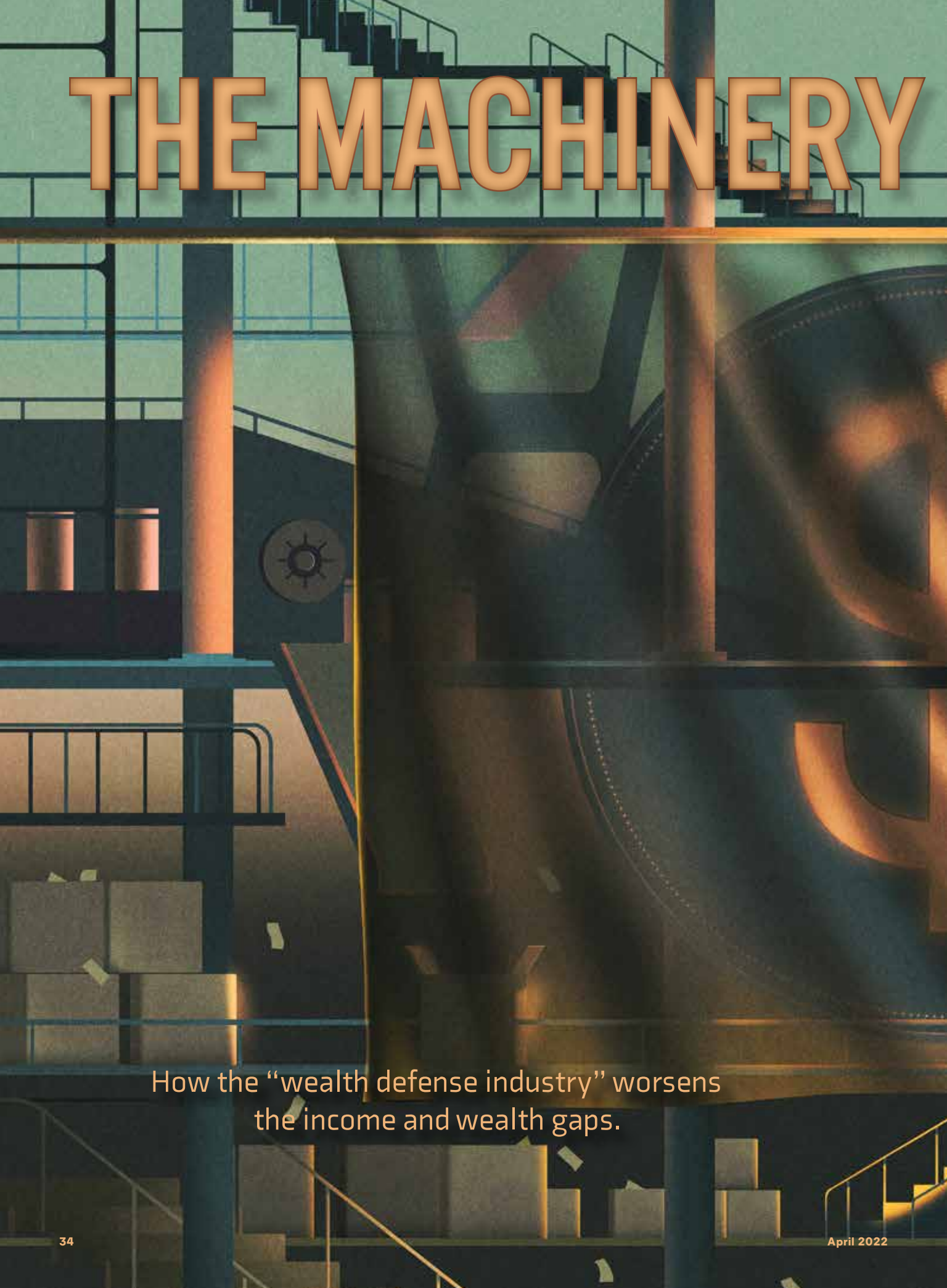
One of the major goals of the Community Remembrance Project is to help people see the connections between racial violence in the past, present, and future, Kiara Boone, EJI’s deputy director of community, told *Sojourners*. “If we do the hard work of truth telling, confronting, documenting, understanding what has happened, then we’ll be in a much better position to implement reforms and solutions that are actually reparatory and that get us to the more just and equitable world which we seek.”

As coalitions coalesce, they engage with their communities by organizing educational and memorial events such as racial justice essay contests for local high school students and soil collection ceremonies at or near lynching sites, the jars of which are then displayed in local exhibits and at EJI’s Legacy Museum in Montgomery, Ala. When deciding where to place historical markers, the coalitions often gravitate toward central, heavily trafficked locations. In many rural communities, that central location is often a church, Boone said. Seven such markers have been placed on or near church grounds.

As a Christian, Tiffany Crutcher said she believes “remembrance work is a radical act of love.” For her, honoring the God-given dignity of lynching victims, remembering their extraordinary faith and resilience, and reminding Black children today that greatness is embedded in their lineage are all steps toward justice. “When our stories and legacies have been silenced for far too long, to be able to right those wrongs and to honor and remember, that’s where justice lies.” ✦

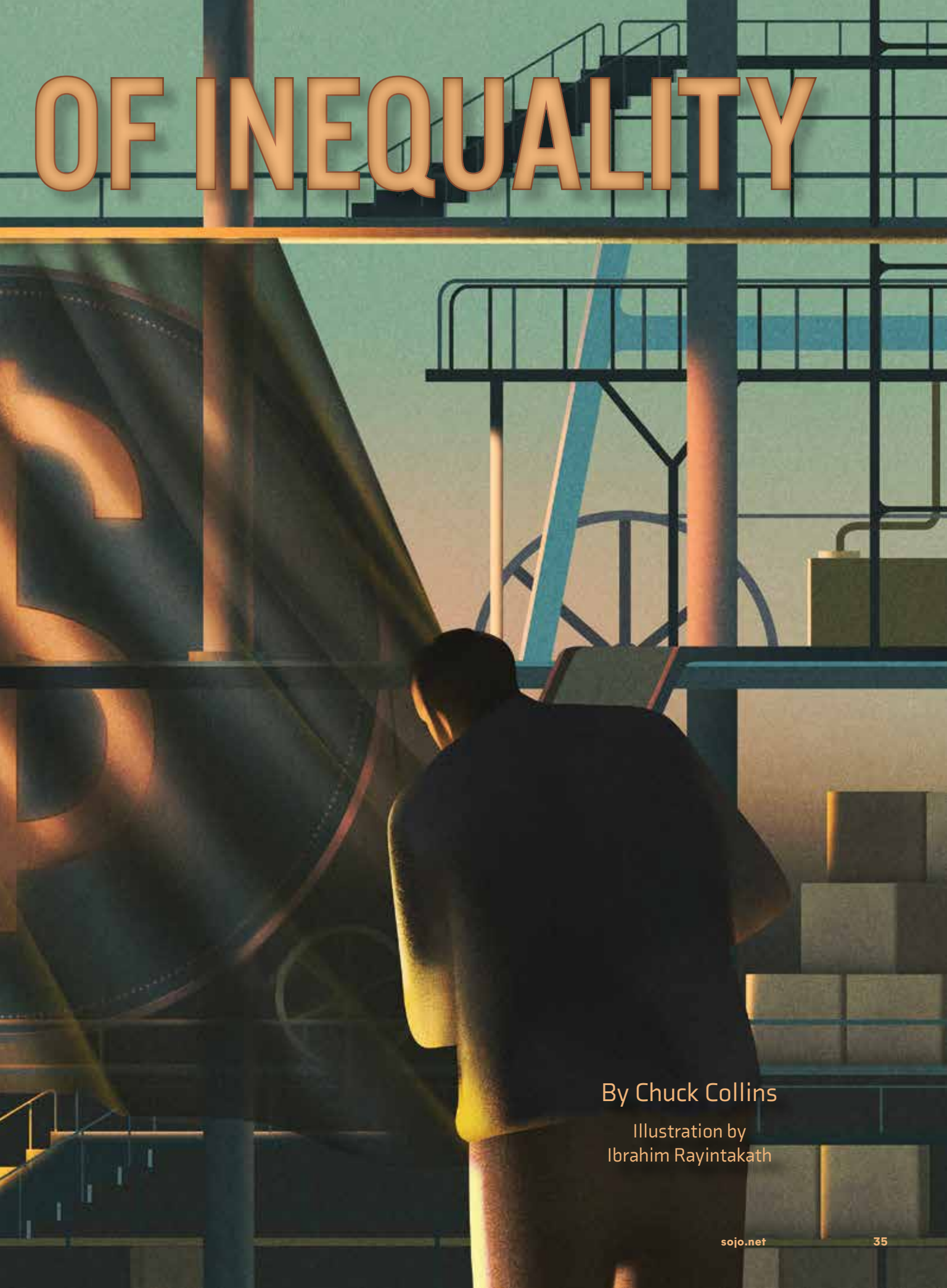
Carol Kuruvilla is a religion reporter based in the New York City area.

THE MACHINERY



How the “wealth defense industry” worsens the income and wealth gaps.

OF INEQUALITY



By Chuck Collins

Illustration by
Ibrahim Rayintakath



a sort of multigenerational wealth immortality. They will defend their actions as “just obeying the law” while instead they are actively engaged in lobbying for law changes and blocking reforms to defend the interests of their ultrawealthy clients.

Every indication is that during the pandemic, wealth-hiding activity has increased. The U.S. estate tax—the country’s only levy on the accumulated wealth of the top 0.1 percent—is so porous that even a former Trump official quipped, “only morons pay the estate tax.” In 2020, the tax raised a paltry \$9.3 billion. An exposé by ProPublica found that half of the wealthiest 100 U.S. billionaires deploy a complex scheme called a grantor retained annuity trust (GRAT) to pass on wealth to heirs and avoid estate taxes.

The number of “family offices” or private wealth management advisory firms serving clans with more than \$250 million has mushroomed, rising from less than 1,000 in the 1980s to an estimated 10,000 globally today. While family offices perform some of the more mundane wealth management services, their core purpose is wealth preservation, tax reduction, and intergenerational succession, essentially a dynasty-building mission.

TAX HAVEN USA

In October 2021, the world got a riveting window into the inequality machinery with the release of the Pandora Papers, the result of a massive set of leaks from 14 offshore wealth service firms in 11 different countries. The leaks were reported by more than 600 journalists from around the world affiliated with the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists. The findings document how the world’s superwealthy dodge taxes and stash trillions of dollars.

When you think of secretive tax havens, you might imagine Swiss bank accounts or Cayman Islands shell corporations. But one revelation from the Pandora Papers is that the United States is now globally recognized as a tax haven in its own right, with our anonymous Delaware limited liability companies and South Dakota trusts attracting the wealth of foreign despots and kleptocrats. Many also launder billions through luxury real estate in the U.S., avoiding taxes while parking their treasure in a stable, regulated market.

The United States didn’t become a tax haven overnight. Over the last 30 years, several states—including South Dakota, New Hampshire, Nevada, Wyoming, and Alaska—have morphed their laws to accommodate anonymous shell companies and trusts with essentially unlimited lifespans. South Dakota is getting special scrutiny because it leads the pack in entities known as “dynasty trusts,” where wealthy families are parking billions with the intention of avoiding taxes for centuries.

The Pandora list does not include many of the U.S. superrich, even though they use the same toolbox of offshore banks, anonymous shell companies, and opaque trusts. That’s because this trove of leaks originated from offshore wealth advisory firms in 11 countries including Samoa, Cyprus, and Belize—not places where superwealthy U.S. citizens go for financial services. And more often, U.S. billionaires no longer have to go offshore.

Two years of living through a pandemic has given us deeper insight into how extreme inequalities of income and wealth matter—and in some cases dictate who lives and who dies.

The pandemic economy supercharged existing inequalities, worsening the economic circumstances of the already precarious while further concentrating wealth and power in the hands of the already wealthy. In the first 21 months of the pandemic, roughly 700 U.S. billionaires saw their combined wealth increase by \$2.2 trillion, even as millions lost their lives and livelihoods. A few hundred U.S. billionaires now have a combined wealth of \$5.2 trillion, while the bottom half of all U.S. households—165 million people—have a combined \$3.4 trillion.

It’s easy to see these inequality trends as invisible or remote forces without agency, or as failures of government policymakers to write the rules of the economy to ensure greater shared prosperity. However, there are private actors who function as “agents of inequality” whose daily work inflames existing divisions. These include what social scientists call the “wealth defense industry”—the veritable professional army of accountants, tax lawyers, wealth managers, and family office staffers that facilitates the hiding and sequestering of wealth.

These enablers serve the ultrawealthy—those with wealth upward of \$30 million—and are paid millions to hide trillions. They labor to ensure that there is a two-tier tax system, with one set of rules for their ultrawealthy clients and another set of rules for everyone else. They also facilitate the creation of inherited wealth dynasties and monopoly power, directly exacerbating the existing racial wealth divide and entrenching concentrations of wealth and power.

The role of these enablers is in plain sight as nations around the world try to recover from the pandemic and find revenue to pay for it. One popular idea globally is to tax the billionaires who’ve profited tremendously during the pandemic. At the 2022 World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, three organizations—Oxfam, Fight Inequality, and the Institute for Policy Studies—called for an annual wealth tax on the 3.6 million people in the world with over \$5 million in wealth.

STASHING THE WORLD’S WEALTH

Taxing the ultrawealthy has broad public support in the U.S.: Nearly two-thirds of Americans support a tax on extreme wealth, like the proposed Billionaire Income Tax introduced in Congress by Sen. Ron Wyden or an annual wealth tax, as proposed by Sens. Elizabeth Warren and Bernie Sanders. Billionaire investor Leon Cooperman complained that if a tax on wealth is passed, the wealthy will simply “rush to find ways of hiding their wealth.” But, as a growing number of leaks reveal, trillions of dollars of the world’s privately owned assets are already hidden. At the global level, as much as \$36 trillion—or more than 8 percent of the world’s wealth—is stashed in hidden wealth vehicles such as trusts, anonymous shell companies, and noncharitable foundations that obscure ownership and responsibility.

These are not affluent families saving for retirement, but the wealthiest people on the planet, those with more than \$30 million and the estimated 2,750 global billionaires. These are the people who can afford to hire professional wealth defense practitioners. They deploy a toolbox of opaque trusts—including what some call dynasty trusts—to sequester wealth for future generations, with the goal of attaining

HARMS

In addition to fueling inequality, this system of wealth hiding causes harm in both the U.S. and around the world.

First, it allows for the plundering of wealth from the world's poorest and most vulnerable populations. The hidden wealth system thwarts the efforts of governments in lower-income countries from taxing their own wealthy citizens to make public investments in health, infrastructure, and education. Some of the kleptocrats parking their assets in the United States have committed crimes in their home countries or pillaged their public treasuries. The hidden wealth system in the U.S., with our anonymous companies and clandestine trusts, enables these heists to happen.

This same hidden wealth apparatus enables the wealthy to shift their tax obligations onto everyone else. When transnational corporations and wealthy individuals dodge their taxes, they pass the bill for public services onto everyone else—or create the conditions for phony austerity and budget cuts. This effectively sticks the rest of us with the costs of public services. As the Biden administration and Congress debate how to pay for long overdue investments in infrastructure and climate change mitigation, the hidden wealth system is enabling the very wealthy to “opt out” of their responsibility to chip in.

The hidden wealth system also disrupts local housing markets in many cities. The secret global cash flooding into U.S. real estate markets adds to the forces pushing up the cost of housing for everyone else. Much of this housing is vacant, a form of “wealth storage” for the superwealthy whose goal is to park their wealth in stable U.S. assets. Affordable housing groups find themselves shadow boxing with anonymous owners in efforts to anchor affordable housing.

This hidden wealth system facilitates the creation of inherited wealth dynasties while undermining economic security for everyone else, especially during a pandemic.

As French economist Thomas Piketty warned, unless the U.S. can reverse this trajectory, we're on track to become a hereditary aristocracy of wealth—where one generation from now the children of today's billionaires will dominate our economy, politics, philanthropy, and culture.

As wealth and power concentrates, the cycle continues. The wealthy deploy their power to further shape the rules, news, and culture of society. They block popular reforms by capturing the political system and ensuring dysfunctional gridlock. This leads to further consolidation of wealth dynasties, impervious to taxation and accountability. It also leads to further social breakdown and polarization, as our collective capacity to solve big problems—like responding to a pandemic or ecological disruption—is rendered inoperative.

For a country that was forged out of a rejection of feudalism, it may be hard to spot the telltale signs of a reassertion of feudalistic and monarchic norms. One component is what law professor Allison Anna Tait describes as a culture of “high-wealth exceptionalism,” where the wealthy believe they are entitled to a separate set of laws and rules governing them because of their wealth—and the rest of society tolerates this arrangement.

REVERSING THE TRENDS

We can shut down this hidden wealth system with greater enforcement, transparency, and global cooperation—efforts that are moving in the right direction in other parts of the world. Congress could invest in tax enforcement, rebuilding the ability of the Internal Revenue Service to monitor the financial shell games of the superrich and to enforce existing tax laws. Congress could regulate or ban trusts and transactions that serve no purpose other than tax dodging.

Such congressional action could build on the success—after a decades-long campaign—of passing the Corporate Transparency Act of 2020, which requires anonymous shell companies to disclose their real beneficial owners to the Treasury Department. At the local level, municipalities are pressing for real estate disclosure laws so communities can unmask anonymous buyers in their neighborhoods.

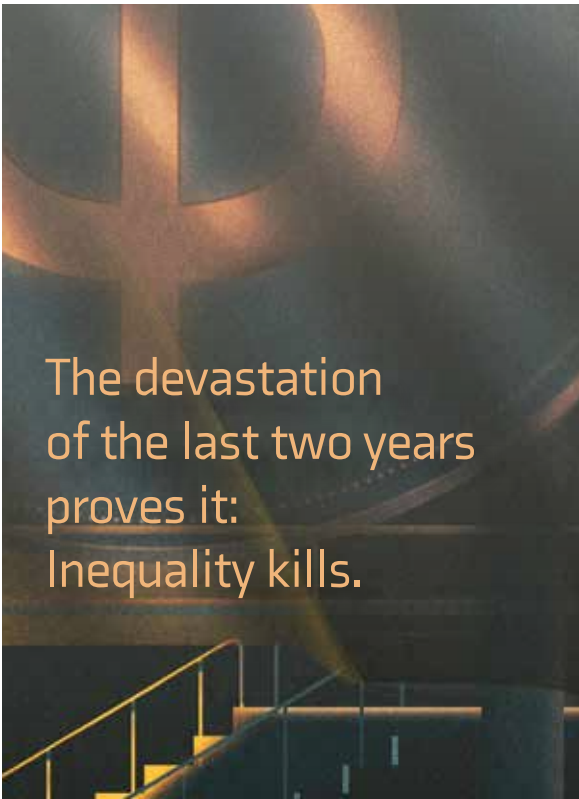
More pressure should be put on the wealth defense industry to be accountable for its actions. Days after the release of the Pandora Papers, a bipartisan group of U.S. legislators introduced the ENABLERS Act, which would require attorneys, wealth managers, real estate professionals, and art dealers to report suspicious financial activity.

In the end, this is a global system. And the U.S. will need to join global treaties to raise standards and ensure global cooperation to root out money laundering. The rest of the world is leading the way, and the U.S. must step up to join the movement.

The barrier to change isn't just the superwealthy, but the self-interested class of professional wealth hoarders at their employ. It is in their interest for the wealthy to create trusts that will live forever—and, of course, provide the wealth managers with substantial fees.

The first step to reform is getting past our cultural tolerance for “billionaire exceptionalism.” The second is to appreciate that the wealth defense industry thrives on complexity and opaqueness and to press lawmakers for transparency and simplicity instead.

If four decades of mounting inequality and stagnating middle-class wages weren't enough, the devastation of the last two years should prove it: Inequality kills. Fortunately, our country is now seeing vibrant new social movements—and vast popular support—to reverse these trends. ♦



The devastation
of the last two years
proves it:
Inequality kills.

Chuck Collins is author of *The Wealth Hoarders: How Billionaires Pay Millions to Hide Trillions*. He is director of the Program on Inequality and the Common Good at the Institute for Policy Studies, where he co-edits *Inequality.org*.

May 16–20, 2022
Denver

Festival of HOMILETICS

**Faith After the Storm:
Preaching and Trauma**

Traci Blackmon
Nadia Bolz-Weber
Thema S. Bryant
Anna Carter Florence
Cláudio Carvalhaes

Serene Jones
Eunjoo Kim
Jacqui Lewis
Karoline Lewis
David Lose

Otis Moss III
Vashti Murphy McKenzie
Yolanda Pierce
Luke Powery
Matthew Skinner

Frank Thomas
Richard Ward
Robert Wicks
Lauren Winner
Robert Wright

Register now: festivalofhomiletics.com



Photo by Gerald Olufemi-Lamar Darling Jr. for Sojourners

**IF YOU WANT TO GO FAST,
GO ALONE; IF YOU WANT
TO GO FAR, GO TOGETHER.**

Justice work should not be a lonely affair. You may have a thriving organizing community and church community, but it can be difficult to find others who want to integrate faith and action in their daily lives.

Join the Faith-Rooted Advocates Network: **a place for people of faith who are concerned about justice in their communities and want to make a change.** Through spiritual practices, advocacy, and mutual resourcing, we work together to secure equitable opportunities for everyone.

Sign up at sojo.net /FRAN

SOJOURNERS

THE TRUTH WILL SET YOU FREE. ARE WE READY FOR THAT?

By Zachary Lee



W

When I first read Gwendolyn Brooks' poem "truth" early last year, I did a double take to make sure it wasn't written in 2021. The 1987 poem personifies its titular subject as a living being that can knock its "firm knuckles / Hard on the door," whose arrival brings an equal mix of anticipation and

Film

apprehension. Brooks describes multiple responses one can have to the arrival of truth. For those who have made peace with lies, the truth can

be threatening: "Shall we not dread him, / Shall we not fear him / After so lengthy a / Session with shade?" Even for those who have longed for truth's arrival, blissful or willful ignorance seems to be a better alternative than the terror of having to engage truth head on: "Shall we not shudder?— / Shall we not flee / Into the shelter, the dear thick shelter / Of the familiar / Propitious



haze?” Regardless, Brooks makes one thing clear: The question is not a matter of *if* truth will come, but when. The most important question of our lives then becomes, how are we to greet it?

In the poem, Brooks doesn’t name the truth that haunts her—although since she first published it in 1949, as the stage for the civil rights movement was being set, one possibility might be the systemic mistreatment of Black people and white people’s willful obliviousness to it. I found the poem to be a peculiar comfort in this time as we try to adjust to an ever-shifting landscape of new realities and reckon with truths about ourselves we might otherwise prefer remain hidden.

Similarly, several films offer insight into how people receive truth’s advent. Two that I see resonating with themes in Brooks’ poem: Jane Campion’s subversive, Oscar-nominated Western, *The Power of the Dog*, features a protagonist who attempts to hide the truth, only to face tragic consequences for his refusal to engage. Meanwhile, David Lowery’s spellbinding epic *The Green Knight* showcases a character who knows the truth fully well and yet willingly keeps it captive or attempts to smother it for his own purposes. Brooks’ poem acts as a helpful blueprint of how culture has responded to truth in times past—and how those responses reveal a yearning for more restorative interactions with truth.

The Green Knight poignantly captures the gloom and foreboding that comes with having to confront unpleasant inner truths. When viewers first see the protagonist Gawain (Dev Patel), a nephew of King Arthur, he’s ambitious to prove himself worthy of his family. His chance comes sooner than expected when, during a feast hosted by Arthur and Queen Guinevere, the eponymous Green Knight rides into the great hall. Driven by his hunger for glory, Gawain impulsively delivers a brutal blow to the Green Knight—but as a result, “one year hence” he must face the knight again, an encounter that will surely be fatal for Gawain.

Gawain spends most of that year wallowing in despair and dissipated behavior. But he cannot outrun the truth. As

the year comes to a close, he begrudgingly saddles up and goes to meet his verdant executioner.

Visually, *The Green Knight* cleverly embodies the disquietude that comes with truth’s arrival. In the opening scene (which does not tie into the plot apart from neatly summarizing visually the film’s themes), the camera focuses on a hovering crown, slowly descending toward a robed Gawain who sits stoically on a throne. As the crown falls, the screen darkens; when it lands on Gawain’s head, he is instantly lit on fire, his burning face the only light in the room. Consider this through the lens of the first stanza of Brooks’ poem: “And if sun comes / ... Shall we not fear him?” The descending crown, like the rising of the sun or a dawning truth, comes rife with apprehension and tension.

If *The Green Knight* put a magnifying glass to our natural responses to truth, *The Power of the Dog* articulates our tendency to flee from truths that will expose us. The film focuses on two wealthy ranchers, brothers George (Jesse Plemons) and Phil (Benedict Cumberbatch) Burbank. While George is soft-spoken and gentle to a fault, Phil is mean, prickly, and as unsavory as raw cowhide. The relationship between the two brothers sours when George marries inn owner Rose Gordon (Kirsten Dunst) and she and her adolescent son Peter (Kodi Smit-McPhee) become part of the family. It is easy to initially paint Phil as simply evil, but midway there’s a revelation of something that Phil has suppressed. We realize there’s something deeper driving the rancher’s rage. His cruelty is seen in a new light as it is revealed that actions he takes to isolate others stem from his own sense of confinement.

Peter learns Phil’s secret, and as Phil fashions a lasso, the two engage in intimate conversation and share a cigarette. The scene, dark with only flickers of light illuminating their faces, is charged with tension. But the moment passes with Phil unable to allow himself the opportunity to acknowledge his truth.

The second stanza of Brooks’ poem reads:

Though we have wept for him,
Though we have prayed cont’d on page 45

**THE QUESTION IS
NOT A MATTER OF IF
TRUTH WILL COME,
BUT WHEN.**

A PROCESS OF BECOMING

By Abby Olcese



In a 2001 lecture titled “Devotional Cinema,” filmmaker and film editor Nathaniel Dorsky broadly described devotional practice as “the interruption that allows us to experience what is hidden and to accept with our hearts our given situation.”

Dorsky connected this defi-

nition to the experience of watching a movie, claiming, “It is alive as a devotional form,” allowing viewers to uncover truths about themselves and the world by watching someone else’s story. A movie doesn’t have to be experimental art, a heavy drama, or a religious epic to be a devotional experience. Often, the most profound stories are about the subtle changes of the soul over time and the experiences and relationships that define a person. We relate to them because, like a devotional practice, they help us reflect on our own lives and consider how we live in relation to others.

Joachim Trier’s *The Worst Person in the World* is one such film, following its protagonist, Julie (Renate Reinsve), from her late 20s to her early 30s. Trier places Julie as the main character of her own story, narrated to us as she lives it, changing careers, falling in love, breaking up, experiencing loss, and becoming wiser and more comfortable with herself as a result.

We first meet Julie as a medical student. Realizing she’s not passionate about her choice of study, she switches to psychology, and then photography. She doesn’t have a serious romantic relationship until she meets older comic book artist Aksel (Anders Danielsen Lie). After several years with Aksel, intimidated by his success while she’s still finding her voice, Julie leaves him for Eivind

(Herbert Nordrum), who’s closer to her in age and similarly unsettled. A few years later, tragedy brings Julie and Aksel back together and causes Julie to both reconsider and accept the choices she’s made.

Julie’s journey feels relatable to anyone familiar with the unique struggles of young adulthood, when you’re pulled by the urge to do something meaningful and lasting while wondering whether every decision you make is the right one—or whether it will chain you to an unfulfilling future. Some bemoan the alleged selfishness of millennials upending their lives in the name of fulfillment, but *The Worst Person in the World*, despite its title, never judges Julie for this process, instead patiently allowing her to become the person she was always meant to be.

Trier’s film sees and loves its main character fully. It gently follows Julie through the relationships and events that make up her life, reminding us to consider those that have defined our own. This movie is devotional in its own way, giving us a story that helps us better reflect on our lives and consider where we’ve been, where we’re going, and where we’d like to be. ❖

Abby Olcese (@abbyolcese) is a freelance film critic and writer based in Kansas.

MOVED BY LOVE

The limited ABC series *Women of the Movement* follows Mamie Till-Mobley as she grieves the murder of her son Emmett Till and fights for justice. Directed by four Black women, the show tells the true story of the woman who helped fuel the civil rights movement.

Two Drifters



Disability Kinship

In *All Our Families: Disability Lineage and the Future of Kinship*, Jennifer Natalya Fink explores how ableism rooted in Nazi eugenics has erased disabled kin from our family stories. Fink calls us to embrace intersectional care and abandon our fear of disability.

Beacon Press



Divesting from Whiteness

Musician and activist Andre Henry combines memoir and manifesto in *All the White Friends I Couldn't Keep: Hope—and Hard Pills to Swallow—About Fighting for Black Lives*. Through personal and historical stories, Henry calls for a revolution to disrupt racial violence.

Convergent Books



THE LIMITS OF SELF-HELP

By Faith-Marie
Zamblé



Curated

When I picked up *Get Untamed*—a journal based on Glennon Doyle’s best-selling memoir *Untamed*—at a secondhand bookstore, I was, as the kids say, down bad. Real bad. A year

of overscheduling, overcommitting, and underhydrating had turned me into the caretaker of a creative and existential abyss. In that bookstore, I was reaching for more than a how-to book. I was reaching for a lifeline. And I found one—just not in the way I expected.

Doyle emerged onto the nonfiction scene with *Carry On, Warrior* in 2013, followed by *Love Warrior* in 2016. The latter book was raw and vulnerable, detailing the dissolution and resurrection of Doyle’s first marriage. Acclaimed by Oprah, Brené Brown, and Elizabeth Gilbert, *Love Warrior* celebrated love’s ability to overcome all obstacles—from addiction to internalized misogyny—in a marriage. Then Doyle met retired professional soccer player Abby Wambach. Doyle and her husband divorced. Now Doyle and Wambach are, by all accounts, happily married. The events leading to this form the basis for *Untamed*.

I cannot speak to *Untamed*’s thematic specifics since I haven’t read it, but the *Get Untamed* journal is full of pithy advice about listening to one’s inner “knowing” and riding the waves of grief to transformation. The end goal is to free the self that has been suppressed by societal strictures and unwanted obligations. Exercises ask you to list times you’ve played small out of fear of disappointing others. It’s all very #girlpower 2021. One section, however, gave me pause. In a text block taken from the book, Doyle states that she is “not a

**THE ART WE MAKE COMES TO US
FROM A PLACE BEYOND OURSELVES.**

good friend.” She “cannot remember birthdays,” does not “want to meet for coffee,” and “won’t text back.” Cue record scratch. How could a compassionate person say these things?

In my “What is going on with Glennon Doyle?” Google search, I stumbled across a podcast episode from two traditionalist evangelical pastors titled “Why Friends Don’t Let Friends Read Glennon Doyle.” The pair spend most of the episode subtly shaming Doyle for her “life choices” and ignoring the societal pressures that might lead a woman to ignore her husband’s infidelities and suppress her own sexuality. Society isn’t the source of our ills, they say: Sin is. Trusting the sinful self to show the way forward can only lead to a “dark place.”

I do not believe the self is always so untrustworthy. Yet, despite my disagreements, I found myself nodding *many* times as they spoke. It has always been my view that the self has limits, and that is why our lives are meant to be lived with others and in their service. Subsequently, the art we make comes to us from a place beyond ourselves. Ursula K. Le Guin, self-professed atheist, goes so far as to call it “the god” who visits us. This spirit wheels in and around our hearts, charting a course between the sacred and mundane. Most important, its voice doesn’t always sound like our own. Listening to myself, the self that craved recognition and feared missing opportunities, is how I ended up burned out and confused. However, in Doylean fashion, listening to that “still small voice” deeper within revealed that I was not lost, just exhausted. A few weeks of rest (and screaming into the void) put me back in touch with my creative spark. I suppose I did get untamed after all. ✕

Faith-Marie Zamblé is an artist, writer, and M.F.A. candidate in dramaturgy and dramatic criticism at the Yale School of Drama.



**"NOBODY'S FREE WITHOUT
BREAKING OPEN."**

"How come the past tense is always longer?"

Vuong presents readers with vignettes of joy amid brokenness, writing with indulgence for the present tense, while expressing a sense of melancholy for what was lost. As he writes in "Dear Sara," "none of us / are children long enough / to love it." In "Beautiful Short Loser," Vuong seems to respond to Mary Oliver's question about what is wild and precious: "I am the last of my kind at the beginning of hope / Because what I did with my one short beautiful life—was lose it / on a winning streak."

He measures his tragedy against biblical stories like those of Jonah and Noah's ark, using his understanding of God and suffering to see how his own story might conclude. Vuong offers a gorgeous telling of God's creation of humans in "Ars Poetica as the Maker" with lines such as "I gave it hands / despite knowing / that to stretch that clay slab / into five blades of light, / I would go / too far."

The poems are daring and experimental, with astonishing images that linger. But the greatest strength of this collection is found in the poems' shared context, as they work together to gesture toward Vuong's reckoning of the past with the future. We

meet him in that liminal space.

"Nobody's free without breaking open," Vuong writes in "Beautiful Short Loser." In "Künstlerroman," he explains that "After walking forever through it all, I make it to the end." To move forward, we must risk the pain of looking back, discovering what we had overlooked or purposely forgotten. It can be like trudging through a thick forest, trying to find or make a clearing. The collection ends with this visceral image that might be a glimpse of hope: "Then it came to me, my life. & I remembered my life / the way an ax handle, mid-swing, remembers the tree. / & I was free." ❖

Olivia Bardo is the online editorial assistant at sojo.net.

GRIEF AS LIMINAL SPACE

Time Is a Mother,
by Ocean Vuong

Penguin Press

In Ocean Vuong's latest collection *Time Is a Mother*, the T.S. Eliot Prize-winning poet reaches for depths of what was lost.

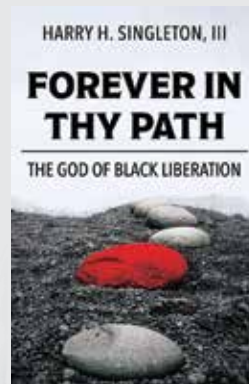
We encounter Vuong submerged in profound and compounding grief after the death of his mother. The book's epigraph from César Vallejo reads, "Forgive me, Lord: I've died so little," touching on the guilt that can accompany those left behind after a death. These poems hold the tension between looking back and moving forward, with the awareness of someone acquainted with feelings "that made death so large it was indistinguishable / from air," as Vuong writes in "Not Even." Those grieving search for comfort, while also examining life before loss—sometimes recognizing that grief was always present.

Time Is a Mother is full of questions that reckon with these past experiences. One of the first poems asks, "How else do we return to ourselves but to fold / The page so it points to the good part." Other verses ask, "What if it wasn't the crash that made us, but the debris?" and

CONVERSION SEEKING TRUTH

An excerpt from *Forever in Thy Path:
The God of Black Liberation*,
by Harry H. Singleton III

Orbis Books



T

To its credit, the Black church seeks to instill a sense of “somebodyness” through positive reinforcement in conversion. But it seeks to do so without deeply immersing the convert in the true history of his/her culture. Consequently, the Black church falls prey to the universalism of the white church by naïvely thinking

that one can be a true child of God while possessed of a deformed racial self-image. In so doing, the static conservatism of the Black church is at odds with freedom movements and prophetic leaders who are able to judge rightly that the freedom of Blacks cannot come through a rejection of one’s history, whether intentional or not.

So when a Black convert proudly proclaims, “I have had an encounter with Jesus,” the retort has to be, “Which Jesus?” Is it the Jesus of white supremacy or the Jesus of Black liberation? The former has promoted Black second-class citizenship, but the latter has proclaimed freedom for Blacks. The former has not been the cure for Black people who have come from the holds of slave ships to their current standing. The latter has come in the truth of the history of African life and is the human embodiment of Black liberation. Such a truth has not come through spirited worship services and spine tingling singing and preaching but through an affirmation of Black people being free Christians and proud Africans. It has also come through a liberating conscience given by God to never tire of deconstructing white theories about Black bodies.

This is why the learning of African/Black history is crucial for a healthy Black self-image—one that does not emerge from white theologians. Black people are able to opt out of being a Christian but not being Black. Black history precedes Black people wherever they go and has been presented negatively in a world ruled by white privilege. But given the liberating message of biblical revelation, those Black people who have maintained their Christian affiliation must make their way through

THE LEARNING OF AFRICAN/BLACK HISTORY IS CRUCIAL FOR A HEALTHY BLACK SELF-IMAGE.

these two poles (Black and Christian), and both must be affirming in their liberating essence, not intertwined in racist pedagogy. In other words, both must be given positive virtue in their initial presentation. There must be a liberating worldview in Christian faith, and there must also be a humanizing treatment of African/Black culture. It is the Black way of saying that white scholars and theologians do not have the last say in how Black people view faith and how they view their blackness. To be Black and Christian demands both.

For this to happen, the conversion process must reorient the thinking that Christian life lies in how well one performs liturgical customs or how well one sings or preaches. Furthermore, the convert must understand that the “apprenticeship” of faith demands a commitment to transforming Christian practice to reflect its liberating essence and to declare to Black people that, where their condition is concerned, the God of Black liberation is not neutral. ❖

Used with permission from Orbis Books
(OrbisBooks.com).



cont'd from page 40

All through the night-years—
What if we wake one shimmering morning to
Hear the fierce hammering
Of his firm knuckles
Hard on the door?

While Phil comes to the brink of opening the door to the “fierce hammering” of Peter’s inquiry and confronting the reality of his life, he instead chooses to make his bed in the isolation of unacknowledged truth.

On the surface, it seems that the stories of a repressed rancher and an ambitious knight-to-be have little common ground. But the narratives of Phil Burbank and Gawain both embody an ache for a better way than dread and suppression to engage with truth.

The ending of *The Green Knight* offers something in the way of hope and perhaps a glimpse of the gospel. As Gawain heads to meet the Green Knight, he wears a girdle his mother gave him that has the power to protect him from harm. But he has a vision of his future in which he gains all he desires but is hated by his people. Gawain realizes that the chasm between a royal title and his flawed character would be too great. True courage and honor means accepting the consequences of his actions, of his truth, even if it costs him everything. He takes off the girdle and faces death.

The works of Brooks, Campion, and Lowery attest that facing the truth can be uncomfortable, upsetting, and often disruptive. Yet it is preferable to “snug unawareness,” as Brooks puts it, or leaving truth at the door. Indeed, in our faith and in our being, to acknowledge and wrestle with truth is how we find fuller life. ❖

Zachary Lee is a freelance writer and campus minister in Ithaca, N.Y. You can find him on Letterboxd @zlee729.



Institute for
Religion, Peace and Justice

APPLICATIONS ARE OPEN IN ALL PROGRAMS

• **CERTIFICATE in RELIGION, PEACE & JUSTICE**

- ONLINE AND ONLY 8 MONTHS TO COMPLETE
- UNIVERSITY ACCREDITED

• **MASTER of ARTS in PEACE & JUSTICE**

- THREE TRACKS TO CHOOSE FROM IN PEACEBUILDING & PUBLIC THEOLOGY
- TRACK 1 – INNER TRANSFORMATION
- TRACK 2 – INDIGENOUS RECONCILIATION
- TRACK 3 – THE PALESTINIAN CONTEXT

• **MASTER of ARTS / MASTER of MINISTRY in THEOLOGY & CULTURE (Peace Studies Track)**

ALL OF OUR PROGRAMS MEET OUR STUDENTS AT THE INTERSECTION OF PEACE THEOLOGY, PRACTICAL PEACEBUILDING, RELIGION IN PEACE AND VIOLENCE, AND THE INNER TRANSFORMATION OF A PEACEMAKER.

APPLY NOW

ssu.ca/irpj-application

LEARN MORE → irpj.org/certificate
[/graduate-degrees](http://irpj.org/graduate-degrees)
[/people](http://irpj.org/people)
[/admissions](http://irpj.org/admissions)



st.stephen's university
Engaging Our Communities. Transforming New Opportunities.

Mindful Walking Travel

Camino de Santiago
France | Spain | USA | China



Specializing in Pilgrimages for:

- Women
- Group walks for all genders
- Grief walks (for those living with loss)

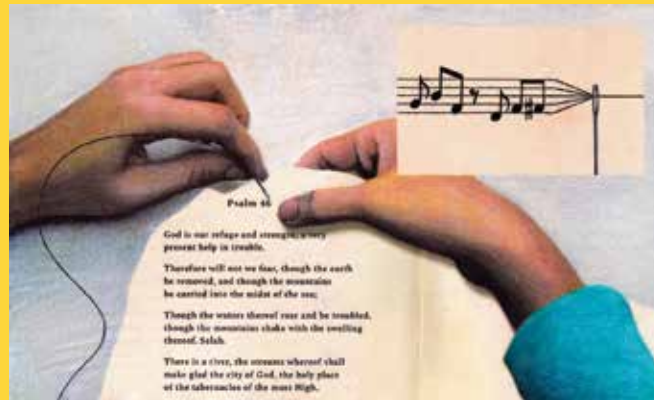


RedMonkeyWalkingTravel.com

PSALM 46

for Charlie Palmieri

By Alfonso Sasieta



My stanzas do not resemble marimbas
after all. These lines are the warmed
rank of organ pipes, droning & melting
their millennia into my shoulders.

Yes, yes, my God is heavyset & broad
& not a week of childhood passes
without Bach or Luther or a collect
that echoes the grungy psalmist

who says, *be still, a mighty fortress
is our God*, while the white cloud
of witnesses assent & for years
I relented that this was the One

true Lord until I heard that fat
Nuyorican organist who insisted
that the *montuno* could handle
the long & heavy notes & what if

God is more bridge than bulwark?
What if Her life's purpose is drawing
you out of your fortress & into the
arms of some gorgeous stranger?

Alfonso "Sito" Sasieta lives near Washington, D.C., and is a member of
a local L'Arche community, where adults with and without disabilities
share their lives together.

GIFT SUBSCRIPTIONS FOR DADS, GRADS, AND EVERYONE ELSE!



Gift subscriptions to *Sojourners* help support our mission to inspire hope and build a movement for a just world.

Sojourners is where Christians turn for a faithful perspective on news and culture.

Order gift subscriptions for your grad, mom, dad, pastor, teacher, Bible study leader, friend, or colleague. Available now in print or digital editions.

To order, go to sojo.net/subscribe or call **1-800-678-9691**.

SOJOURNERS

OUR GOD WILL NOT BE BRIBED

Scripture passages are
from the Revised Common
Lectionary, Cycle C

By T. Denise Anderson



Living the Word

We tend to approach Lent passively. Some of that is appropriate. After all, we start Lent by putting ashes on our heads to symbolize our grief, and grief often makes us more still. But Lent is a

season of intentional activity. To repent is to shift course. We continue to move, but in a different direction. We walk with God, following where God leads, no matter what we must leave behind.

This journey eventually leads to the cross, and later to resurrection. That's when we find the journey has just begun. We were made to seek God, to question, to be in tension with mystery, to wrestle with God like Jacob, and to eventually find what we're looking for. And when we come into contact with God in whatever ways are possible, we realize we cannot serve this God as one would serve an idol. We cannot operate out of empty ritual or rote adherence to any custom. We can't appease or bribe this God. This God is not confined to our shrines, nor does God thrive off our material gifts and sacrifices. What this God wants is much more profound: repentance, trust, and a complete reorientation of one's heart away from self and toward companionship with God. Many who've prepared to walk the Camino de Santiago pilgrimage did so by training on their own trails for months before making the trek. Lent similarly trains us for a lifelong journey of resilience, trust, and resistance to the forces of evil and despair. ❖

T. Denise Anderson is acting director of Racial Equity and Women's Intercultural Ministries at the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and lives in Louisville, Ky.

"WE WHO BELIEVE IN FREEDOM CANNOT REST!"

APRIL 3

EMBRACING CHANGE

ISAIAH 43:16-21; PSALM 126;
PHILIPPIANS 3:4-14; JOHN 12:1-8

A great irony of ministering in the Reformed tradition is that people rarely welcome change. It's at best tolerated and often fully resisted. The body may process threats (real or perceived) in ways that bypass cognitive thinking and engage our survival reflexes. But change is part of life, and history shows what can happen when we don't constructively embrace it: violent xenophobia that has followed an influx of immigrants; resistance of the majority to various civil rights movements; or an attack on the U.S. Capitol to stop Congress from certifying election results. We have a responsibility to appropriately interpret and respond to change, lest we miss the good that can accompany it.

The Deutero-Isaiah text foretells salvation for Jews in exile in Babylon. God would do a "new thing" (43:19), make a change that would return them to their ancestral land. They were urged to forget the "former things" (verse 18) and move on. Psalm 126 sees the same community rejoicing in the changes God had made, though they wrestle with the specter of what existed before and the longing to return to that. Church leaders may be very familiar with such wistfulness.

But there are also those who run *toward* new paradigms, who embrace change. In John's gospel, Mary of Bethany is an example of someone going in a radically different direction for the sake of something greater. In his letter to the church at Philippi, Paul proudly claims his authority as a righteous Jew to invite these Gentiles not into Judaism but into the new thing God is doing with Jesus as the Messiah. In this messianic age, these Gentiles will worship the God of Israel in a new way, as Gentiles and not as Jews.

As Lent concludes, we consider that repentance includes an invitation toward new paths carved by the Spirit. Can feelings of threat be overruled by trust in God's "new thing"?

APRIL 10

CHRIST'S LYNCHING TREE

ISAIAH 50:4-9; PSALM 118:1-2, 19-29;
PHILIPPIANS 2:5-11; LUKE 19:28-40

It will never be lost on me, thanks largely to the work of theologian James Hal Cone, that what happened to Jesus was a lynching. The word “lynch” likely came to us during the Revolutionary War, but public torture and murder of dissidents to terrorize and extract compliance from the oppressed predates that word by centuries. Whatever your preferred atonement theory, it should be said that Jesus was killed because he threatened the status quo.

Appropriately, Deutero-Isaiah's third servant song is included in the readings this week. The servant has tried to be faithful in his teaching and willingly put up with abuse. It's unclear why he would go through all this except that he believes he'll be vindicated. Vindication is also a theme in Psalm 118 and was a refrain among the crowds as Jesus entered Jerusalem for the Passover festival. His entrance was an act of protest against the occupying power, and it didn't win friends among religious leaders who'd hoped to align with that power. An affront to the ruling authority of this magnitude could not go unanswered, and future attempts needed to be disrupted. It is this kind of direct action that lynching tries to disincentivize.

There is a righteous indignation so overwhelming that the rocks would cry out (see Luke 19:40) if we did not. At protests in U.S. streets today, one can hear chants inspired by the words of organizer and archenemy of racialized terror Ella Baker: “We who believe in freedom cannot rest!”

APRIL 17

OUR INTIMATE GOD

ISAIAH 65:17-25; PSALM 114;
1 CORINTHIANS 15:19-26; JOHN 20:1-18

John's account of the resurrection is my favorite. There is a beautiful intimacy to it. Mary Magdalene, who is not named a disciple because of her gender but very much was, came to Jesus' tomb after he was murdered by the state. We're not told why, but it's presumed she came as a last act of service to her teacher. She needs to properly prepare his body for burial. He

died before the start of Sabbath and there was no time between his last breath and sundown for those preparations. They had to hurriedly wrap him and place him in the tomb, but none of the other rites, rituals, and last acknowledgments of human dignity were performed. So, she came to retrieve the body, but it wasn't there. Even when Jesus approaches her, she doesn't initially know it's him until he calls her by name.

Mary's conviction to share the news of the resurrection is born out of a deeply personal encounter. As Deutero-Isaiah comes to a close, the prophet casts an eschatological vision in which God and people know each other intimately: “... while they are yet speaking, I will hear” (65:24). Psalm 114 echoes this refrain of a special bond between God and God's people. For the church at Corinth, it was important that Paul cast a similar eschatological vision that reassured them of bodily resurrection and the promise that death itself will be defeated. The resurrection signals a closeness of God to humanity that won't be overcome even by death. This God knows and is with us in ways more profound than we know—even when it seems defeat is imminent. For a people who need a change, whose humanity and *imago dei* have been denied for so long, this is good news. Alleluia!

**RESURRECTION IS GOD'S
ULTIMATE PRANK ON
THE FORCES OF DEATH.**

APRIL 24

AN EASTER LAUGH

ACTS 5:27-32; PSALM 150;
REVELATION 1:4-8; JOHN 20:19-31

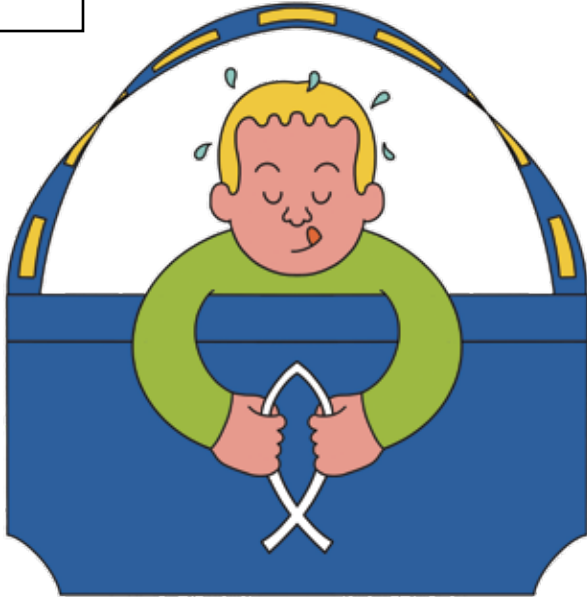
The second Sunday of Easter is celebrated by many as “Holy Humor Sunday,” which has its roots in 15th-century Bavaria. Christians celebrate *Risus Paschalis* (“Easter Laugh”), and priests include jokes in their sermons to make their congregations laugh as a way of celebrating the resurrection of Christ, which is understood as God's ultimate prank on the forces of death and evil. The resurrection is God getting the last laugh, so this is a day to laugh and celebrate the sovereignty of God.

Jokes are only funny, however, if you get what they mean. If you need to explain a joke, it's usually not funny. But, unlike other jokes, this “joke” multiplies our joy when it's explained over and over again. This is what happens for Thomas in today's gospel and to so many disciples after him. If you are the butt of the joke, however, as the council and high priest persecuting the disciples were, it's no laughing matter. In John's eschatology, even those who pierced Jesus will see his coming with the clouds. Psalm 150 is a doxology to the entire book—“Let everything that has breath praise the Lord!” (verse 6). Its vision is one of complete and pervasive acknowledgement of God's goodness.

Historian of religion and humorist M. Conrad Hyers once said, “Humor is not the opposite of seriousness. Humor is the opposite of despair.” The punchline of Easter is that despair is dead, *not us*. Our Redeemer lives! Like Epiphany, the news of the resurrection unfolds slowly, sometimes painfully so. Even the disciples kept their doors locked in fear of what might come their way from those who killed their teacher. But Jesus has a way of appearing on the other side of our locked doors, dispelling our doubts and even our despair. ✕

“Preaching the Word,” Sojourners' online resource for sermon preparation and Bible study, is available at sojo.net/ptw.

H'rumps



**“NO OFFENSE, IKEA, BUT DID YOU
EVEN GO TO SEMINARY?”**

I have so many showrooms. C.S. Lewis once described Christianity as “a hall out of which doors open into several rooms.” Um, I don’t wanna make this all about me, but does that sound familiar to anybody?? Hallways are a good place to deconstruct before finding a new denomination or theology—aka “room”—to settle into. But remember, some rooms are better than others. Some rooms have Swedish meatballs. Other rooms are best to avoid. Complementarianism, for instance, is one of my least favorite showrooms. None of the mugs are dishwasher safe, and there are too many posters that say “Live, laugh, love, if your husband says it’s okay.”

Ugh and don’t get me started on the substitutionary atonement showroom. The swear jar takes up half the counter space, and even on Christmas Day that place is decorated like it’s Good Friday—crucifixes made of shiplap EVERYWHERE.

Here’s another bit of advice when deconstructing your theology: Always keep the screws. Put them in a plastic bag and label them with a Sharpie. It may feel like your deconstruction is permanent, or you may believe that your current theological construction is impervious to doubt. Still, keep the screws. You can’t sell IKEA furniture on Craigslist without them.

Now, this last part is the most important. I want you to close your eyes for a second and think about the last time you put together an IKEA bed frame. You likely called your best friend with a power drill to help you. If you needed someone there to help you construct, shouldn’t you also have someone there for the deconstruction? It is best not to peel back the layers of your theology in isolation (unless it’s like an IKEA coffee table made mostly of particleboard, melamine foil, and plastic edging—best to just put that one out on the curb).

Jenna Barnett is associate culture editor, sojo.net.

IKEA EXPLAINS RELIGIOUS DECONSTRUCTION

By Jenna Barnett

Allow me to introduce myself: I’m IKEA, an expert in DIY construction and deconstruction, here to explain a recent religious phenomenon. According to a 2021 *Relevant* magazine article, Christianity is in “the age of deconstruction.” “Through deconstruction,” explains writer Kurtis Vanderpool, “we are able to find the good and the helpful parts of our faith upbringing, while reshaping or throwing out the unhelpful.” But there is a problem! While the exvangelicals on Twitter are obsessed with deconstruction, “most people you will find in church are uncomfortable with deconstruction,” says Vanderpool.

You may be thinking, “Is an enormous warehouse full of good-enough furniture really equipped to explain a sensitive theological process? No offense, IKEA, but did you even go to seminary?” No, I didn’t. But nondenominational churches often pay me thousands of dollars to host massive lock-ins and I overhear A LOT of really bad theology as youth pastors, groggy chaperones, and sugar-faced youth groups play hide-and-seek in my showrooms. (I’m pretty sure I didn’t dream this.)

BUILDING THE FAITHFUL FUTURE



In the 1970s, Sojourners community meetings, above, were often indistinguishable from magazine planning meetings.

As we celebrate **Sojourners' 50th anniversary**, we are looking back at our journey through photos and stories from the archives. Search your favorite social media platform for the hashtag **#FaithfulFutureFriday** to explore our past, present, and future. Together, we will continue putting our faith into action for social justice for many years to come.



facebook.com/SojournersMagazine



SOJOURNERS
BUILDING THE FAITHFUL FUTURE



Free Resources

— FOR A —

Deeply Formed Spiritual Life

Drawing from the expertise of Fuller Seminary's world-class faculty and beyond, FULLER studio engages with the big questions at the intersections of faith and the real-world issues of today. Explore FULLER studio's articles, podcasts, and videos, and dive into topics ranging from immigration and racial justice to neuroscience and global theology—and so much more.

Learn more at Fuller.edu/Studio